PLOTINUS ON SELF

Plotinus, the founder of the Neoplatonic school of philosophy, conceptualises two different notions of self (or 'us'): the corporeal and the rational. Personality and imperfection mark the former, while goodness and a striving for understanding mark the latter. Dr Remes grounds the two selfhoods in deep-seated Platonic ontological commitments, following their manifestations, interrelations and sometimes uneasy coexistence in philosophical psychology, emotional therapy and ethics. Plotinus' interest lies in what it means for a human being to be a temporal and a corporeal thing, yet capable of abstract and impartial reasoning, of self-government and perhaps even invulnerability. The book argues that this involves a philosophically problematic rupture within humanity which is, however, alleviated by the psychological similarities and points of contact between the two aspects of the self. The purpose of life is the cultivation of the latter aspect, the true self.

PAULIINA REMES is a lecturer and postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Philosophy at Uppsala University and the University of Helsinki.

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The Philosophy of the 'We'

PAULIINA REMES

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Note: The pronouns 'he', 'him', 'himself' have been used to indicate both masculine and feminine gender.

Contents

Acknowledgements *page* vii
Note on editions and abbreviations ix

Introduction 1

PART I THE ENDOWED STRUCTURES OF SELFHOOD

1 Two lives, two identities: the ontological and anthropological setting 23
1.1 Eternal entities and temporal particulars 32
1.2 Human individuals and individuality 59

2 The conscious centre 92
2.1 From proprioception to self-awareness 96
2.2 Mental connectedness 110

3 The rational self and its knowledge of itself 125
3.1 The powers of intellect and reason 126
3.2 Self-knowledge of the thinking thing 156

PART IICONSTRUCTING THE SELF: BETWEEN THE WORLD AND THE IDEAL

4 Sculpting your self: self-determination, self-control and self-constitution 179
4.1 Freedom and self-determination 180
4.2 Therapy of emotions and what is up to us 185

5 Action and other people: the self as a citizen of two communities 213

6 Losing the limits of the self? 239

Conclusion 254

Bibliography 258
Index locorum 269
General index 280

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Note on editions and abbreviations

The edition of Plotinus' *Enneads* used is:

Henry, P. and Schwyzer, H.-R. (eds.) (1951–73) *Plotini Opera*. Vols. 1–3. Oxford.

Very useful has also been the Loeb Classical Library translation of Plotinus:

Armstrong, A. H. (trans.) (1966–88) *Plotinus*. Cambridge, Mass. and London.

Abbreviations of Greek and Latin texts follow the system of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, with some exceptions listed in the *Index locorum*, the most notable being the customary Arist. *EN* (Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) and *EE* (*Eudemian Ethics*).

Abbreviations of journals follow the system of *L'Année philologique*.

In addition, the following abbreviations have been used:

LS = Long, A. A. and Sedley, D. (1987) *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Vols. I and II. Cambridge.

SVF = von Arnim, H. (ed.) (1905–1924) *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Leipzig.

Introduction

Who am I? This question continues to trouble us. The somewhat cryptic three-word sentence breaks up into various queries: What kind of being am I? What essential features do I share with animals or with other human beings? What differentiates me from them? What or who is this thing now sitting or writing this introduction, thinking these thoughts? Why do I often experience myself as a single subject of experience, or believe myself to be an autonomous agent capable of causing changes in the world, but at others feel a divided and inconsistent creature, or a powerless slave of circumstances? Do those experiences reveal anything about my true nature? What in the midst of all this is particular only to me, as this one individual, this person with these thoughts, likings and personal characteristics?

For a long time, the notion of self was considered to be accompanied by ontological commitments that scholars with a physicalist and scientific world-view could hardly entertain.[1] But there is still no escape from these questions. Even though they may ultimately lead to different kinds of inquiries about, for instance, the essential nature of human beings, personal identity, rational agency, etc., and even if many of these issues would be best approached from a third-person rather than a first-person perspective, they still have one aspect in common: they are all, broadly speaking, reflexive.[2]

[1] An influential worry first expressed by Hume stated that in our experience it is impossible to get hold of any 'who' that is watching, i.e. of any subject separate from the experiences themselves ('when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other'; Hume 1739: book I, chapter 4.6 Of personal identity). Many have more recently expressed their scepticism about the usefulness and coherence of the notion: to mention just a few, Kenny 1988; Anscombe 1991; Olson 1999.

[2] This broad use differs from the narrow sense used later in this book, e.g., in chapter 3.2. The broad usage belongs to the same group of usages as 'token-reflexive' or 'reflexive pronoun', that is, relations that are directed back to the person, time or place who, when or where they were uttered. The narrow usage to be encountered later strives for a further differentiation, that between reflexive and reflective, distinguishing such self-relations that are immediate and sometimes automatic or passive from those mediated by conceptualisations or other representations and in which the subject actively engenders the relation.

They are all questions that the inquirer asks about his or her own nature. Similarly, there is a special group of relations that one may or may not conceptualise, but that are reflexive in nature. For example self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-evaluation or self-determination are directed back to the subject or person who initiates the relation. This is a book about the philosophy of the self in this general sense, and in particular, a book about the ways in which a highly influential late antique philosopher, Plotinus, posed and answered reflexive questions.

Not all reflexive questions are interesting for the philosophy of the self. Self-questions and self-relations form normative hierarchies. Consider, for instance, the following exchange: 'Why am I wearing these shoes? Because it is raining today.' This short monologue, despite its reflexive turn, does not constitute a true self-relation in my sense of the term, because it does not throw any light on the broad question as to who or what I am. Had the answer been: 'Because I have a shoe fetish, and choosing the right shoes for each day is almost compulsive behaviour to me,' we would already be nearer to a meaningful self-relation. Issues about the self are only partly descriptive. They are purely descriptive, perhaps, only in so far as we attempt to describe the most basic forms of self-relations, like the pronoun 'I' in linguistic communication and its immunity to misidentification, or a bodily self-awareness that enables us to move, coordinate and protect ourselves, or a primitive experiential self-referentiality that can also be called self-acquaintance or self-familiarity, that is, the strange feature of consciousness as something revealing itself to itself.[3] More often than not, however, the philosophy of the self carries with it strong views about what is or is not understood as valuable in the flesh-and-blood human being. The emphasis is on those aspects of our nature that enable us to live a good and meaningful human life.

The identification of the self is thus tied to judgements about value. Crucial is what one believes to express oneself best, be that cognition, desire, moral choices or personality.[4] An Aristotelian, for example, may think that since the composite of soul and body is unified and the true agent that acts in the world, it would be quite appropriate to say that the whole person is the proper object of self-inquiry. For Thomas Nagel, the self is the person with whom one identifies among all personalities of the world. The Kantian tradition stresses the subject of experience, the self as a pure identity-pole. For the phenomenologist, the self may be a

[3] For the 'I', e.g., Castañeda 1966; for bodily self-awareness, cf. e.g., Bermúdez & Eilan 1995; for first-personal givenness, e.g., Zahavi and Parnas 1999: 257; Zahavi 2000.

[4] Sorabji 2006, chapter 2 calls this 'the locus of importance'.

feature or function of the structures of experience, or the agent of truth: namely, that which exercises rational thought, yet is deeply bodily at the same time. Various thinkers from medieval philosophers to certain theorists of psychoanalysis have treated the subject as primarily 'will' or 'desire'. For Socrates and Charles Taylor, as for many others, the self is first and foremost one's deep intellectual and moral commitments. The last view opens up an importantly different approach to selfhood, sometimes discussed under the heading 'the narrative self' or 'the hermeneutical self'. The self is not treated as a given but as something evolving or narrated in time, under constant reinterpretation and construction.[5]

In the context of ancient philosophy, the dual – the descriptive and the normative – approach to selfhood is excellently brought out by Anthony Long's phrasing 'What to make of oneself?'[6] What is of interest is not only what or who one is, but what or who one wishes to be and become. In addition to the questions about the self's nature, as well as the epistemological worries about how to reach some reliable views on it, ancient philosophy places a particularly strong emphasis on self-shaping, on self-improvement and on the normative issues involved.[7] True self becomes equivalent with *ideal* self, and selfhood thus not a mere given but a gradual process towards correct self-identification. Moreover, the process of self-constitution is understood teleogically, as fulfilment of moral and especially intellectual ends for which human beings exist. In Plotinus' theory, too, only one aspect of human nature strictly speaking merits the name 'self', and philosophical development is progress towards recognising this aspect rightly. This yields a selfhood in another sense of the word, a self as a process towards the ideal end.

Analogically to the contemporary caution about the notion of self, it is possible to talk about ancient philosophy of the self only by bearing in mind certain qualifications. The English term 'self' is used as a translation for a variety of expressions in the languages of ancient philosophy, Greek and Latin. Greek, like most languages, allows reflexive talk about 'himself' *autos heautou*. Much more argumentation is needed to show that there is something like 'the self', 'selfhood', or 'ipseity' in the ancient conceptual apparatus. This would seem to be the case, however, with for

[5] For different approaches and views e.g., Zahavi 2003; Pitson 2002; Nagel 1986: esp. chapter IV; Sokolowski 2000: chapter 8; Taylor 1989; Jopling 2000.

[6] Long 2001; on selfhood as constructed rather than a simple given in antiquity, cf. Nehamas 1998.

[7] Concerns about selfhood in antiquity are thereby connected with ethical issues and, as we shall see especially in chapter 3, with the (in)vulnerability of happiness, discussed by several scholars in the 1980s and 1990s. Cf. e.g., Nussbaum 1986; 1994.

example Aristotle's conception of the friend as another self (*heteros autos, allos autos*).[8] With the singular masculine article *ho*, *ho autos* usually means 'the same', whereas in the other order *autos ho Sōkratēs*, for instance, signifies 'Socrates himself', suggesting a tempting connection between self and sameness or identity.[9] With its meanings of, on the one hand, 'humanity' or even 'ideal/rational man', and, on the other, '*the* man' or 'the fellow', *anthrōpos* (with the simple meaning 'human being') suggests sometimes 'self' or 'person' rather than species membership.[10] In Plotinus, as we will see, the plural *hēmeis* ('we', 'us') strives to distinguish our truest nature or self from the whole human being.[11] In addition to this conceptual variety, there was no established topic of anything like the 'philosophy of the self', and no works entitled, for instance, *On self and person*. Nor was there agreement about what kind of terminology or ontology would explain human nature, subjectivity and agency best.

Importantly, the human mind was not, at least primarily, conceived as standing apart from the world in its private solitude. Its relation with the world was believed to be, rather, somewhat straightforward: the world was perceivable and intelligible, and the human mind capable of perceiving it, and, with hard work, of understanding its basic structures.[12] Most, if not all, thoughts or states of the soul were not conceived as autonomous in the sense of being self-standing or independent of external circumstances.[13] Human perception and cognition were seen as either involving or recapitulating the objective structures of the world, or, as in Platonism, the immaterial and eternal paradigms that make the sensible world such as it is. This

[8] Arist. *EN* 1166a32; 1169b6–7; 1170b6–7; cf. e.g., Plot. *Enn*. II.3.9.30–1. (From here on, references without further specification are always to Plotinus' *Enneads*.)

[9] Thesleff forthcoming.

[10] For ideal self, e.g., Arr. *Epict. diss*. 2.9.3; for a particular 'fellow' pointed out: e.g., Pl. *Phd*. 117e; *Prt.* 314e. In Platonism, *anthrōpos* can also refer to the whole composite whereas 'true' self is something else, an immortal being; *Phdr*. 246b–c; Cf. Gerson 2003: 2. Plotinus speaks of two human beings, the lower and the one 'over' it, the higher (e.g., VI.7.4.29–30; 5.21–2), meaning two levels of humanity and selfhood. In addition, e.g., the *First Alcibiades* uses the puzzling *auto to auto* (129b) and *auto hekaston* (128d; 130d). On Platonic self, cf. Thesleff forthcoming; on the *Alc.*, Denyer 2001; Remes forthcoming a.

[11] Plot. VI.4.14.16.

[12] In a well-known article, Myles Burnyeat claims that the ancients did not consider the subjective as a realm about which there is or could be knowledge, and only after Cartesian discovery 'of the truth of statements describing the subjective states involved in the process of doubt' does subjective knowledge become central for epistemology. Knowledge and truth are thus always connected to the objective realm. It has even been claimed that for the ancients, even appearances are always wholly objective rather than subjective. For these claims and some discussion, cf. Burnyeat 1982; Everson 1991; Fine 2003, Remes forthcoming b. For perceptual realism in antiquity, cf. Tuominen 2007; forthcoming.

[13] It is often assumed that Cartesian states are autonomous in this sense, although this is a disputed matter. Cf. Fine 2003: 203.

given relation to the world that all human souls share may be expressed by Plotinus' choice of the plural 'we' (*hēmeis*) in place of the modern singular 'I' in posing the central question: 'Who are we?' For him, as for most ancient philosophers, each consciousness grasps, ideally, the very same world. Not only is the structure of consciousness the same in every mind, they also share objects and, as we shall see, the normative *telos* of human existence.

Regardless, however, of these cautions, ancient philosophers, too, were preoccupied with questions that forced the issue of self upon them. For example, the Delphic and Socratic exhortation to know oneself (*to gignōskein auton heauton; gnōthi seauton!*)[14] makes one wonder what the object of that kind of knowledge is. The originally Socratic and Platonic demand to care for oneself (*epimeleia heautou*)[15] similarly raises the question what is the 'oneself' or self that ought to be the cared for. The ethically and therapeutically central idea of controlling oneself (e.g., *archein heautou, enkrateia*)[16] has again the same structure and draws attention to the paradoxical nature of these self-relations: how can the same entity be both that which controls and that which is controlled, that which knows and that which is known? All these issues concern the self and its relation to itself, and despite the often shared nature of the inquiry and the methods used in self-development, they are and – if any progress is to be expected – *must* be motivated by and for the subject himself.

Through a long development in which the Stoics play a central role, it is finally in late antiquity that these issues become more explicit. Central figures include, among others, the late Stoic emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, and the Christian philosopher Augustine.[17] For Plotinus, to live a good and worthy life, to gain autonomy as an agent, and to acquire knowledge are all tied to self-identification and self-realisation, that is, to the understanding of what and who one really is. Moreover, Plotinus articulates this chiefly in terms of a turn inwards (*epistrophē pros heauton*), towards the inquirer himself, incorporating Stoic ideas about examination of one's inner life and motivations into his own ontology and psychology. His philosophy incorporates much ancient thought, and yet it is a step in a new direction. Although Plotinus understood himself as a follower and disciple of Plato,[18] and although many of his views about the self are either

[14] E.g., Pl. *Chrm*. 165b–c; *Alc*. I 124a–b; 129a; 132d–3b. Also the word *epistēmē* is used for knowledge of this kind occasionally.

[15] E.g., Pl. *Ap*. 36c–d; *Alc*. I, e.g. 124a–b.

[16] E.g., Pl. *Grg*. 491d-e; *Resp*. 430e–1a.

[17] For different approaches, cf. e.g., Hadot 1998; Foucault 2001; 1997: e.g., the chapter on self-writing; Cary 2000.

[18] V.1.8.10.

explicit or implicit in Plato – for instance self-transformation as intellectual transformation, or the distinction between a given and an achieved selfhood – he does go further than his master. As we shall see, Plotinus' views are sometimes simply more radical than Plato's, and the Aristotelian and Hellenistic developments in many areas of philosophy allow him to rewrite Platonism in several ways. In the five hundred years between the two thinkers, the understanding of the temporal and material organisation of the world as well as of human beings – their bodily nature, agency and self-relations – all went through significant developments. In Plotinus, the interest of both Plato and Aristotle in the soul-body composite and in human nature as essentially rational evolves into an explicit conceptualisation of two different dimensions of selfhood, the bodily and the rational or reflective.[19]

Furthermore, the Neoplatonic understanding of the structures and hierarchies of metaphysics as simultaneously *internal* to the soul leads to a considerable strengthening of the Stoic methodology of turning inwards as a method capable of providing peace of mind, security and ultimately knowledge.[20] The inward turn gives a new spin to Plotinus' thought. It initiates a process which no longer seeks to grasp the self primarily in objective terms, but which will ultimately lead to an understanding of the self as an inner realm distinct from the world, a space where the person can turn and examine himself. The inward turn recurs several times in this study – indeed, it can be said to be one of the common threads. I will explicate, among other things, the ontology and psychology behind it, the kind of life and choices that make the turn possible, as well as the experience and the realm that open in the inwardly directed gaze. The novelty to have a long aftermath is that Plotinus' psychology, together with the methodology of inward turn, leaves more room for a selfhood and an inner realm that belong only to one person, that are his own. On issues concerning the inner nature of the self, he precedes such figures as Saint Augustine, René Descartes or John Locke.[21] For Plotinus, however, the inner realm is still only partially private. If the turn is accomplished with success, the inward

[19] In his introduction, Seigel 2005 (especially the introduction) makes a most useful distinction between bodily, relational and reflective dimensions of selfhood. Of these, the bodily and the reflective are distinguished from each other by Plotinus.

[20] For this strand in late Stoicism, cf. e.g., Hadot 1998.

[21] The outline of the historical development is sketched out, for instance, by Cary 2000 in the following manner: What happens, or ideally should happen, when the soul looks at the world? (1) Plato: the mind's eye sees the eternal and pure ideas. This is an intellectual vision that is shared. (2) Plotinus: the mind's eye sees the pure and eternal ideas. This does not happen primarily by gazing out towards the world, but ultimately by directing its gaze towards the inner, the ideas within the mind or soul. Yet the resulting intellectual vision is shared. (3) Augustine: the soul looks first inside, into its

turn will ultimately reveal objective realities and infallible knowledge. This transitional position in the development of ideas and concepts that would become central to the Western way of thinking makes Plotinus significant from the point of view of the history of philosophy.

The approach chosen in this study is not, however, one of history of ideas. This is a study of the thought of one thinker, and of what he has to offer for philosophical discourse on the self. I will show that Plotinus draws attention to several crucial aspects of selfhood – some that had not been at the centre of study in the philosophical schools before him, and many in which we remain interested still. He is puzzled, for example, by what it is for a human being to be a temporal thing, with a history, a future and a changing nature. He attempts to accommodate this aspect with an intuition that there must be a subject of change, someone or something to whom a particular stream of consciousness belongs, whose history and future are at issue, and from whose position and perspective they have meaning. He is adamant in trying to capture that part of us which he believes to be rational, self-determined and invulnerable, and which he identifies as the innermost self. He strives to understand what it is for experiences and thoughts to be 'mine'. As a late antique thinker he offers us fresh, foreign, and sometimes also unattractive stances, especially towards questions of a normative nature. Even his more radical views belong to a theory that has internal motivation and systematicity.

Since the topic of the self is infested with muddled terminology, a note on the terms to be used is in order. It has hopefully already become evident that when I talk about the 'self', the term itself need not commit us to any specific theory about the self's ontological nature. Despite Plotinus' belief that the self has an ontological basis, in this study the term itself is not equivalent to soul substance or anything of the sort. From my point of view, even those who say that there are no such things as selves and that the whole concept is actually misleading, have something to offer for the philosophy of the self in the sense that I use the term. They must be able to give an account of reflexive human capacities and functions such as self-consciousness and self-knowledge. They must explain – or explain away – the so-called sense of self, the sense that we are some kind of unified mental

own mind's space, and only then up towards God. As such, the soul cannot attain God. It can only approach it through its memory and inner space, where God and Christ are present. This inner space is private. (4) Locke: there is solely one's own inner space, which is private and where the subject sees only images of the things that are outside. In this development, the inner realm shrinks step by step. Divinity and reality are progressively externalized from it. This is a process of privatisation, and it leads to the Western understanding of the self as an inner and private space.

presence distinct from our experiences.[22] They must have some answers to the kind of questions posed at the very beginning of this study. Even if they would deny self-relations the kind of special nature they have often been given in the history of philosophy, this denial takes a form of an inquiry into the nature of that which inquires. As Plotinus asks himself after an inquiry into the nature of living beings (I.1.13), what is it that carried out this investigation?

Though not conceptually independent from issues of ontology and philosophical psychology, talk of the self nevertheless adds something distinct and otherwise unobtainable to the discussion – a normative or hortative dimension, something indicating that these seemingly disinterested inquiries do have something to do with *us*. This is also why philosophical psychology and philosophy of the self are not coextensive. On the one hand, not all questions interesting from the point of view of philosophical psychology – e.g., the details of the functioning of the sense of taste Aristotle discusses in the *De anima* – need to be crucial for the philosophy of the self. On the other hand, questions about the self include metaphysical and ethical issues not necessarily of psychological interest.

It may still be asked whether the kind of inquiry proposed might fit under other inquiries, whether it could well be reduced to some other kind of approach. Why not talk simply of a philosophy of, say, human beings? If only human beings have the kind of self-relations and self-concern the author is interested in, and if the inquiry happens as much – or more – by examining other human beings as it happens by inquiring into oneself, would it not be enough to inquire into philosophical anthropology? This proposal carries weight, and it is certainly the case that drawing a definite line between the philosophy of the self and other branches of philosophy is a hopeless task. This book, too, will include parts that would easily go under the headings of anthropology, metaphysics, philosophical psychology or philosophy of the emotions. Moreover, since the ancient philosophers themselves often talk about human beings (*anthrōpos*) when posing reflexive questions, there are even stronger reasons to take the suggestion seriously.

There are, however, compelling reasons *not* to opt for it. First, even though ancient philosophers understood human beings as special, it is not clear that taking humanity as the starting point has any claim to be the self-evident and unquestioned basis of inquiry. Some self-relations, like bodily self-awareness, are not exclusive to human beings. From what we can judge on the basis of their behaviour, animals share this feature with

[22] For sense of the self, cf. Strawson 1999a; 1999b.

human beings, although in a non-conceptualised way, and infants present a similar case.[23] Self-relations form an interesting group, reaching from non-conceptual all the way to conceptualised and rational relations that are no longer merely reflexive but reflective. The second-order reflecting of self-relations is, undoubtedly, a peculiarity of human species, which is why the study of human beings is so much closer to the philosophy of the self than study of, say, other mammals. Second, and more pertinent to the context of this study, the way in which Plotinus poses the question is not the third-personal 'What are human beings?', but the first-personal and reflexive 'Who are we?' (*tines de hēmeis*; VI.4.14.16). He separates this query from the topic of, for instance, the essence and functions of the soul that can be inspected from a third-personal and objective stance (cf. I.1.13). Again, the issue is something not distinct but nonetheless over and above the issues of ontology and of philosophical psychology. Plotinus' terminology includes, further, the above-mentioned inward turn, as well as a recurring use of the reflexive pronoun *heauton* (oneself) and the third-person pronoun *autos* (he, but also emphatic 'himself'). In this he may well be on the right track: Many contemporary scholars agree that there is something special about the reflexive 'I'. For instance, Richard Sorabji has recently pointed out that this 'I' with its correct identification is action-, emotion- and intention-guiding, and as such necessary for us.[24] Even if, for the most part,[25] only humans or human souls have the properties and abilities under inspection, self-questions and -relations form a group of their own.

Those scholars who are broadly sympathetic to this kind of approach have sometimes chosen to talk about 'person' rather than 'self'. In my terminology, 'person' is a worldly thing, associated both with body, responsibility, action as well as with personality, whereas 'self', as we have seen, can be both a broader and a narrower notion.[26] Unlike 'person' which is at times given a quite specific meaning – like, for instance, a legally responsible agent or someone with a distinct personality – 'self' can be approached from a variety of directions. It can denote the whole person with body, personal properties and a particular history, but also, say, the mere subject of experience and thought, a pure ego-pole that episodes of thought or experience refer back to. To what one assigns the name 'self' is a matter of philosophical taste, as

[23] Butterworth 1999; Legerstee 1999.

[24] Sorabji 2006: chapter 1.

[25] For Plotinus, as for ancient philosophers in general, rationality is not purely a human property, but the world itself is intelligible, as are stars and possibly semi-gods and gods (if there are such things).

[26] Sorabji (forthcoming: chapters 1 and 2) makes a distinction between a thin and a thicker notion of self. The thin notion refers to the bare *me* indispensable for the human being's relations to the world, the thicker notion to the conception of oneself as someone, a bearer of many qualities, emotions, etc.

well as approach. Since there are no definite or agreed rules about the use of the notion 'self', even the same philosopher may, and very likely will, identify the self differently from different points of view. The subject of cognition or of self-consciousness may be understood as a different thing – or as the same thing but under a different description – from the morally or legally responsible agent.

The variety of possible approaches has recently been expressed as different *dimensions* of selfhood, which, according to one interpretation, can be classified into three main categories, the bodily, the relational or cultural, and the reflective.[27] Plotinus, too, recognises that there are different ways one can approach the issue: '"we" is used in two senses, either including the beast or of that which is above it' (I.1.10.5–6; for beast, cf. Pl. *Resp*. 588c). The 'beast' refers to the non-rational behavioural motivations closely connected with the functions and needs of the body, whereas reason is what is above it. The relational dimension of humanity gets little attention from Plotinus, and we have thereby a two-dimensional discussion of selfhood. The self can be understood either as incorporating both dimensions or as pointing to, for reasons which will become clear in the course of this book, just the rational part of our soul. At first sight, it would seem to be the case that, in Plotinus scholarship, the English term 'person' suits the composite, the embodied self,[28] rather than the entity 'above' it, and I will at times refer to the former as a person, although there will be some difficulties with this use as well.

In any case, Plotinus' philosophy of the self is only secondarily about those beings we mostly think of as persons.[29] Particular embodied selfhood gets deserved attention, but the main interest lies in the ultimate structures of subjectivity and free agency rather than in embodied personhood or personality. For Plotinus, these structures are properties not merely of human beings but visible as aspects of the hierarchical metaphysics in which human beings partake. This makes them, although structurally reflexive and

[27] Seigel 2005: esp. the introduction.

[28] In research literature, this self is sometimes called empirical, making use of the Kantian empirical self that shares features with Plotinus' lower self. I wish to avoid this use for one crucial reason: an empirical self refers to a self-relation that is third-personal. The self is approached in a similar manner as all other persons and things in the world. Plotinus' embodied self is mostly empirical in that same sense, but it does have its own immediate and non-conceptualised self-awareness, a bodily relation to itself that it cannot have to any other body in the world. Cf. chapters 2.1 and 4.2.

[29] The Greek word translated sometimes as person, *prosōpon*, means usually in Plotinus 'face' or 'countenance', and only rarely 'character' or 'person' (closest to the latter usage come III.2.15.23; V.5.13.17, but in both cases the word is a part of an analogy for something altogether different, and displays, hence, no views nor a theory about personhood). Plotinus does not seem to make use of the Stoic theory of personhood.

first-personal, shared and universal. Sometimes, however, it seems that he wants to emphasise a special feature of the structures, that there is such a thing as 'my subjectivity' or the subjectivity of one single person that is his or her *own*. For this emphatic point I will sometimes use 'I', to separate it from self or selfhood which is 'ours', that is, a recurring phenomenon or structure shared by all subjects.

Although Plotinus allows for a use of self which includes the bodily, he maintains that the true self is the paradigmatic[30] perfect knower. Why separate and reify a self above the whole embodied person? Plotinus saw the peculiarity of the human self in its desire and capacity to consciously strive towards goodness and towards its own development and integration through the use of reason. In this he firmly follows a general trend in ancient philosophy where human flourishing is connected with the aspiration to become 'as godlike as possible'.[31] For Plotinus, every person has a single rational and self-aware soul. The self-aware thinker is the unitary core of every changing and complex person. One dimension of the thinker is a principle and an ideal of thought, an atemporal, self-identical, complete and fully coherent thought activity, connected with the divinely organised essential structures of the universe. This paradigm has an embodied and temporal counterpart, the subject of fallible reasoning, capable of reflecting on itself as well as the contents within its mind. The embodied self has knowledge, coherence, unity and flourishing as its *telos*, but the innate powers it has from the higher and paradigmatic aspect secure that it can pursue them with success. Since unity and coherence are essential to true selfhood, from the latter point of view selfhood is a process towards the selfhood as an honorary title, something that is continuously achieved in the daily life of self-control and rational self-realisation. This is a third way of looking at selfhood prominent in this study, the self as a process, and one that Plotinus himself does not draw explicit attention to, but it seems to be implied by the relation between the two previous ones, the embodied and the ideal. The reflective or rational dimension of selfhood will merit the focal place because, as we shall see, it is that which makes the processes of self-constitution and self-realisation possible.

This outline already gives rise to several concerns. The idea of a perfect, inner self with its consciousness and happiness separate from those of the embodied self is bizarre. Healthy people without multiplex personalities

[30] By paradigmatic, I mean throughout the book *standard, exemplary, ideal* – perfect. In Plotinus, it seems that both forms and hypostases can serve as paradigms which the sensible imitates. Cf. e.g., Sedley 1999 on Plato, and Gerson 1994: 3–4 on Plotinus.

[31] Pl. *Tht.* 176b; cf. Long 2001; Sedley 1999.

tend to think of themselves as single,[32] and Plotinus' repeated worries about unity render the 'double self' view even more out of place. There may be room to argue that the relation of the higher self to the embodied personal self and soul with faculties like sense-perception and appearance (*phantasia*) can, at best, be tenuous. Even if one understood the perfect inner core solely as an ideal self and the embodied self as that which is capable of directing itself both to the sensible and to the intelligible, the Plotinian picture may remain disunified. A self can concentrate its attention on and identify itself with both its aspects. But in ascent, our personal self is compensated by a vision of and unity with the universal. The ethical improvement and ascent to the intelligible universe and even higher, all the way to the so-called mystical union which Plotinus recommends, end up creating, at best, discontinuity in selfhood through time, and, at worst, a total devastation of the self. Does the normative process towards selfhood lead to a loss of the self?

Yet another anxiety may arise in the case of the so-called higher self. Is Plotinus entitled to emphasise the role of reason at the expense of body and emotions? It may be asked whether a pure intellectual soul retains any features of *self*. It is impersonal, that is, it has no personal characteristics and no memories. It is not a detached possessor and observer of its own mental states because it is in a peculiar full identity with its objects of knowledge. Were any one intellect to reach that state of perfection, it is questionable whether it would be distinguishable or distinct from any other perfect knower of the same sort. Generally, is the propounded intellectual self-realisation a symptom of an impoverished view of what it is to be a self, a view which demotes the bodily and the cultural dimensions of selfhood?

This book argues that whereas questions about inconsistency as well as allegations of impersonality, inhumanity and over-intellectualism may have their place, these are minor deficiencies understood in the context of Plotinus' main project. Self is understood, on the one hand, as the unitary subject of consciousness, thought and reflection, and as having freedom to direct its abilities to self-improvement. As we shall see, Plotinus believes that only reason's activity is self-sufficient enough for control and self-control, and thus for ideal autonomy and self-determination. Through innate capacities to recognise the salient features of the universe and to revert to itself, reason provides the basis for correctly understanding one's own nature and place in the intelligible universe. On the other hand, another

[32] This aspect of our sense of the self is noted, for instance, by Strawson 1999a; 1999b.

type of selfhood is firmly tied to the everyday life with its temporal and worldly nature. This embodied self is a process in time, the *telos* of which is to bring the inner rational self to illuminate the life of the lower self. This rational self-realisation can also be described as a process of self-creation of embodied selfhood. The kind of life it leads, the virtues and values it cherishes and the extent to which it acquires knowledge depend on its own efforts at self-constitution. Its capacities of engaging in this task are, however, given and beyond its own powers of transformation.

From the present standpoint, there are peculiarities in the ways Plotinus, and ancient philosophers in general, answer the very questions this introduction started with. One is the place of metaphysics and ontology in the explanations. Ancient philosophers do not shun metaphysics. Quite the contrary: for them, locating the self in metaphysics (and often also in cosmology) is of primary importance, and on this '**ontological selfhood**'[33] all other approaches must be founded. Accordingly, the book will start with a lengthy chapter on metaphysics of the self and individual, designed to function as that foundation (chapter 1). After introductory words on Plotinus' metaphysics and the kind of anthropology it entails, as well as his rather particular branch of dualism, selves are located in Platonic ontology starting from the distinction between temporal and eternal entities. The chapter presents two reasons for treating the embodied self, the composite of soul and body, and the so-called higher self as very different kinds of beings. Plotinus seems to think that an entity in time is stretched across episodes in an analogy with the way an entity in matter has spatial parts. He makes a sharp distinction between the stable identity and unity of pure forms as well as immortal souls and the identity of sensible objects which have unity and identity only in continuity. He discusses individuation and individuality in human beings, and seems to have an elaborate way of accounting for the differences between the embodied human beings. An embodied person is always an imperfect image of the form of human being because of the necessities of time and matter. The composite of soul and body differs both from the perfect form of human being and from the rational soul. In relation to the former it is less complete, in relation to the latter it is disunified.

The ontological and anthropological background will be followed by a chapter on the **subject of consciousness and self-awareness** (2). Plotinus

[33] I owe this expression to Mikko Yrjönsuuri, who is about to publish a book on the conception of self in the Middle Ages. His sorting into ontological, cognitive, voluntary and teleological selfhood is most useful, although perhaps not as such applicable to ancient philosophy.

believes that, despite the many divisions and complexities the ontological nature of self gives rise to, there is in each human being a unified centre of thought and experience. The subject is unified by self-awareness that characterises all levels of selfhood. This notion derives – perhaps surprisingly, taking into account Platonist suspicions about the body – from Stoic reasoning about a perceptual and bodily self-awareness or proprioception (in Greek: *sunaisthēsis*).[34] The chapter raises the worry of two co-present and hierarchical consciousnesses that might deepen the distinction between the higher and the lower self, but also presents a way in which the two selves, at first sight distantly related, are in fact connected and might be brought into further unity.

Because the higher self is, in a sense, nested within the embodied one, self-realisation of it is possible through the exercise of reason, consciousness and self-reflection. Chapter 3 concentrates on the **rational self and its knowledge of itself**. The innate reasoning capacities of the mind to organise information and to recognise the salient features of the world make it possible for the embodied self to gain knowledge and to integrate itself by organising its beliefs towards coherence and unity. Ideally, the coherence would correspond and reflect the interconnectedness and order of the realm of forms. And although the paradigmatic Intellect does not just correspond to but *is* the forms, it is also an activity in which all their interrelations are fully actualised, in which the intelligible harmony is fully realised. Internal coherence integrates the multiplicity of thoughts into a single thing. This is why the self is first and foremost the capacity to reason, a thinking thing.

As the reader will notice, I will treat the hypostases, and especially the Intellect as directly explanatory for human cognition and consciousness. Evidence for this view is also presented in chapter 3. The extent to which Plotinus uses metaphysics to explain human cognition is displayed, among other things, by how adamant he is in claiming that even the Intellect is self-aware of its internal objects, the complete set of forms in perfect order; it just has no need to make changes to that set, or to reflect on them from a distance. Moreover, Intellect's perfect knowledge and self-awareness of that knowledge is construed so that it also yields paradigmatic self-knowledge of itself as a thinking thing. In this discussion, Plotinus discusses the so-called paradox of subjectivity, phrased much later by Edmund Husserl in the following way: 'being the subject for the world and at the same time being

[34] For this distinction in the current literature, cf. Neisser 1997.

an object in the world'.[35] Plotinus demands that true self-knowledge ought to reveal the self not just *qua* the object, but *qua* the subject of thinking. There is an aspect of subjectivity that persistently flees the objectifying gaze.

While the rational abilities are given and human beings **free, self-determining agents**, in practice this freedom is compromised in and by the world. The next chapter (4) concentrates first briefly on self-determination as a given feature of souls, but then especially on the ways in which it can be realised in human life. Every act of controlling emotions which tie us to the necessities of the external realm is an act of self-determination and self-realisation for the embodied self. By those acts the self actualises the power that it most genuinely is. It separates itself from that which is not an authentic part of it. These acts of control also contribute to the self-constitution or -creation of the embodied person in time. By coming closer to unity with its inner, ideal core, the person becomes a more internally integrated self. The inquiry into emotions displays also Plotinus' sensitivity to the problems and dependencies of the self of the world, which is at times disunified.

While chapter 4 and the discussion on the therapy of emotions already point towards a certain notion of virtue and *eudaimonia*, there are other questions about **moral agency**. The emphasis on rational selfhood and the sometimes accompanying contempt for the bodily selfhood raise the question of the value of action in the world as well as of the usefulness of the proposed self-improvement for action and moral engagement. Chapter 5 focuses on these issues and on the significance of other people in Plotinus' inwardly turned philosophising. Does centring on the ego lead to egocentrism?

The book concludes with an assessment of whether or not the self in Plotinus is a determinate thing at all, and what its normative status is (chapter 6). What are **the limits of the self**? Since the aspiration is towards universal knowledge and perhaps even towards an experience beyond that, a 'touching' of the ultimate *archē* of everything, the One or god, should we, ultimately, relinquish whatever limits confine us, perhaps even lose or annihilate the self?

Before embarking on this journey in pursuing the different aspects of selfhood in Plotinus, I wish to place this study in the contexts of scholarship on philosophy of the self and on ancient philosophy in general, and in the field of Plotinus and Neoplatonic research in particular.

[35] Husserl 1970: 178. Until recently, I was under the impression that Plotinus had also detected this problem, but as so often in history of philosophy, his discussion develops a theme already present in earlier writers, in this case the Sceptics. Cf. Crystal 2002.

The revival of the notion of self which this study follows is not the vulgar interpretation of Cartesian soul-substance with all its concomitant problems, but a new and more modest notion. It is a result of the recognition that dispensing with the concept of 'self' altogether may be much harder than was hoped for in the twentieth century, and that we are bound, perhaps, to retain this notion, but analyse very carefully and critically what kind of commitments it brings with it. I have already briefly referred to issues of bodily self-awareness, of sense of the self, and of the built-in self-reference of experience that are all of current interest. Empirical studies have again put self-relations under detailed scrutiny, with interesting results demonstrating, among other things, pre-conceptual and perceptual self-awareness and the development of conceptual layers.[36] The neural aspects of ourselves have gained much emphasis. These are the ways the brain's reception and retention of experiences, memories and dispositions make us what we are.[37] Many scholars understand this implicit or unconscious aspect of our selfhood as an important but not exhaustive approach to the self. Empirical innovations are being accommodated into questions of conceptual selfhood and those aspects of identity which are significant for discussions of life and its meaningfulness.[38] The new formulations of self try also to take into account objective, social and interpersonal dimensions of selfhood. This development in philosophy is paralleled – or perhaps even preceded – by psychological studies that emphasise the social dimension and see the self as constituted in the dialogue between the contingencies of everyday life, and in the interactions with other people.[39]

The recent interest in the notions of self and person has also had its counterpart in scholarship on the ancient world. The new wave of studies on ancient philosophy has taken into account especially the social and third-personal dimensions prevalent in ancient theories of the soul and human nature. Christopher Gill, for example, advocates a view of the ancient self or person as 'objective-participant' rather than 'subjective-individualistic'.[40]

[36] For the sense of the self, cf. Strawson 1999a; 1999b; for empirical studies on infant self-awareness, e.g., Butterworth 1999 and Legerstee 1999. Cf. note 3.

[37] E.g., Moss 2004, reviewing a conference organised by Joseph LeDoux. For a view that the self is not real but a useful fiction of the brain, cf. Dennett 1991.

[38] For, e.g., Foucault and his followers, these questions never lost their interest. For an example of a new convergence of conceptual and empirical approaches, cf. Flanagan 1996.

[39] For philosophical approaches, cf., e.g., Velleman 2002; and the last chapter on 'the self in dialogue' in Jopling 2000. The work of Michel Foucault belongs, broadly, to a similar approach. For a more psychological approach, Neisser and Jopling 1997. For a history of the idea of self, Seigel 2005.

[40] See also Reiss 2003 especially the introduction.

Gill is no doubt right in claiming that the principal attitude of ancient philosophy is, broadly, of the former rather than the latter kind, but, to begin with, since the first part of his study reaches only as far as Aristotle, the picture that it gives does not describe the developments particular to *late* antiquity. As we shall see, Plotinus' contribution lies more in describing self-awareness, self-determination and the peculiarities of rational subjectivity than it does in any aspects of social selfhood. Second, as Lloyd P. Gerson and M. M. McCabe have argued, even in the case of classical philosophy, namely Plato, the picture may well be more complicated. The 'objective-participant' is not the *ideal* aspect of selfhood. The normative ideal is, perhaps, closer to the subjective-individualist conception, although it should not straightforwardly be equated with the kind of conceptions found in Descartes, Locke or Kant.[41] Moreover, as these scholars including Alexander Nehamas point out, in one sense selfhood is something that one aspires to, or constructs, rather than being a given.[42] In the case of Plotinus, the same hierarchical and aspirational model repeats itself much more explicitly, and the signs of the subjective conception to come are even clearer (as will be argued in chapters 3 and 4). Were one to force him to the above classification, his views would seem interesting not so much from the social and objective point of view but, rather, as a prelude to subjective and private aspects of selfhood. It is a further problem, however (to be discussed in chapters 1.2. and 3.2), to what extent Plotinus' conception is *individualist* at all.

The many ways in which reason and rationality are central for Platonic conceptions of selfhood have been discussed, in different ways, by L. P. Gerson, M. M. McCabe and Raphael Woolf.[43] These works form a clear reference point for scholarship on later Platonist understanding of the self, and thus also for this book. A comprehensive approach to the ancient notion of self has been recently made by Richard Sorabji,[44] who also emphasises those aspects of selfhood that are not primarily tied to rationality, ethical ideals or normative issues. Besides the helpful introductory chapter on the notions of 'self' and 'I', his work presents and analyses many discussions ancient philosophers had, among other things, on self-consciousness and personal identity. Parts of this book follow a similar approach. Further, I have already mentioned Anthony Long's work on selfhood in ancient thought which I have benefited from.[45]

[41] Gerson 2002: 9–10. [42] McCabe 1994: chapter 9; cf. also her 2000; Nehamas 1998: esp. 4–5.
[43] Gerson 2002; McCabe 1994 and 2000; Woolf 1997; 2000. [44] Sorabji 2006.
[45] Long 2001 and parts of his 2002.

This volume is not the first work on Plotinus' philosophy of the self. In many ways, I am indebted to decades of Plotinus scholarship, and especially to the one existing monograph on the self in Plotinus, Gerard O' Daly's *Plotinus' Philosophy of the Self* (1973) – a wonderful and concise study that starts from the background of the Delphic commandment 'Know thyself' and follows the notion of self through the Neoplatonic hierarchy of levels of reality, the hypostases.[46] It incorporates and engages, further, with earlier Plotinus scholarship, that is, with such eminent figures as Emile Bréhier, E. R. Dodds, Pierre Hadot, W. Himmerich, Willy Theiler and Jean Trouillard. My purpose is not to rewrite this study. I will start from a rather different standpoint and situation: on the one hand, the present study is thematised in a radically different manner. The hypostases are a necessary background for any study of Plotinus, but here they have only an ancillary role. As has become clear, I approach Plotinus with different self-questions and -relations in mind. Through this viewpoint, I strive to make Plotinus' thought more readily available not just for students and scholars of Neoplatonism but also for readers interested in self and/or ancient philosophy in general, but who may be unacquainted with the subtleties of the heavy metaphysics of Plotinus. On the other hand, thirty years of scholarship on the notions of self and person have to some extent changed our concepts and loci of emphasis as well as our ways of reading ancient philosophy. Thus my aim is also to offer an up-to-date study of one branch of ancient philosophy of the self.

There are many studies that intersect with this enquiry. Robert Bolton's *Person, Soul, and Identity. A Neoplatonic Account of the Principle of Personality* (1994) offers an interesting Neoplatonic defence of the concept of personal identity understood as unitary causal principle. I have learned much from the above study which differs, however, in many ways from the one at hand. First, Bolton's explicit aim is to propose for philosophical discussion an identity based on a spiritual soul, a unitary and substantive centre of the being, whereas I am not concerned with, nor committed, here, to the truth of that idea. Second, the following chapters will show points where my interpretation of Plotinus is at variance with the one given by Bolton. Henry Blumenthal's *Plotinus' Psychology. His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (1971), Gary Gurtler's *Plotinus. The Experience of Unity* (1984) as well as other works on Plotinus' psychology have also been valuable. Lloyd P. Gerson's section on the self in his *Plotinus* (1994) incorporates many ideas that I have attempted to inquire deeper into. Carlos Steel's *The Changing*

[46] For the term hypostasis and its meaning in this study, cf. p. 24, n. 4.

Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus (1978) and Manfred Krüger's *Ichgeburt* (1996) concentrate on pupils and kindred spirits of Plotinus. Various other works and articles that have inspired the different parts of this volume will be acknowledged in due course.[47]

Finally, as has become clear, the primary purpose of the book is not to trace the historical development that led to Neoplatonism or this particular view of the self, nor its afterlife in later philosophers. Importantly, the impact of Middle Platonism is left out as a question of its own.[48] There are, however, two ways in which the study does take part in such discussion. First, it is my hope that the book will help in placing Plotinus on the map of the development of the Western notion of the self. He was still missing from Charles Taylor's *The Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity* (1989), only merits a passing remark in the introductory chapter of Jerrold Seigel's *The Idea of the Self. Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (2005) and although there are studies such as Phillip Cary's *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self. The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (2000) that duly acknowledge Plotinus' influences on Augustine and through him to later thinkers, these kind of studies do not explicate Plotinus' thinking in its own right, but as a prelude to Augustine.

Second, often unravelling the history of certain philosophical ideas and concepts helps us to see what is involved in their present use, and in this case their Plotinian use. This is why sections of three chapters (1.2, 2.1 and 4.2) also include claims especially about what Plotinus may have read or by whom he was influenced. Besides the repeated – direct and indirect – references to Plato, and the clear impact of Aristotle, Plotinus incorporates originally Stoic concepts into his philosophical system. To an extent, this may be due to the fact that the Stoic terminology had become widely used in philosophical circles, and need thus not signify any deep influences in terms of content. However, it does seem to be the case that sometimes there is more continuity than a shared philosophical terminology. Because of the fundamental differences of metaphysics – the Stoics being materialists and Plotinus holding only the forms as being real and matter, in fact, as

[47] Unfortunately, I found Werner Beierwaltes' *Das wahre Selbst. Studien zu Plotins Begriff des Geistes und das Einen* (2001, Frankfurt am Main) only after the bulk of this study was already written, but I do refer to his earlier works occasionally.

[48] This may create some difficulties, as sometimes it is possible to interpret as foreign influences that actually reflect changes within Platonism. Middle Platonism is, however, beyond my scope and current expertise.

being unreal – Stoic influences have been somewhat neglected in Plotinus scholarship.[49] In particular his use of the terms 'forming principle', *logos* (chapter 1.2), 'self-awareness', *sunaisthēsis* (chapter 2.1) and 'up to us', *eph' hēmin* (chapter 4.2) preserve important philosophical insights of the Stoics. Plotinus' use of the borrowings is, however, always situated within his own (neo)-Platonic framework, sometimes even in conscious opposition to those Stoic ideas which he finds to be misconceived. Since the Stoics are indubitably one focus of interest on issues concerning ancient selfhood and personality, the line between them and Plotinus is a fruitful one to test.

[49] Here, too, there are exceptions, like Graeser 1972.

PART I

The endowed structures of selfhood

CHAPTER 1

Two lives, two identities: the ontological and anthropological setting

There is a long Western tradition, one no longer much in fashion, in which the self is understood as being essentially double. On the one hand, each human being lives in and through the body, whereby his mind is filled with perceptions and desires that connect him to the surrounding world. On the other hand, many philosophers have thought that beyond perceptions and experiences there must be something or someone to whom the perceptions belong and who also unifies them; that is, that there is a unified centre of consciousness or rationality. This idea gets one of its expressions in the Kantian division between empirical self and transcendental subject. The two levels or natures of humanity which this kind of thinking entails are separated by having different functions, sometimes, as in Plato, even their own proper desires,[1] and depending on the point of view of the inquiry, both have a claim to be a – or *the* – self. The division into a transcendental or higher, and an empirical or lower, self is connected with but not identical nor reducible to that of soul and body. For example, a dualist as well as a hylomorphist – someone who believes that the soul is not separable from the body but the form of the living body – both see human nature as essentially double, and both can argue that there is only one self, choosing either the composite or one of the parts that make up the composite as the self. It is something else again to think that there are two different natures that both warrant the title 'self'.

Despite an awkwardness connected to the 'double-decker' nature of this view, it has some intuitive appeal. Human nature embraces aspects that are difficult to understand as functions of one and the same thing. Initially, it is not self-evident that the agent of abstract thought and the agent of, say, nutrition, are one and the same. The relations of agents to themselves seem structurally different from their relations within the world. This book will

[1] Plato's tripartite theory is more complicated than this, but this feature alone is noted already to lead towards a double-self theory. Cf. Robinson 2000: 41.

present an early but influential[2] version of the double-self view, and the reasons why Plotinus arrives at this view. In this chapter it will begin from the metaphysical assumptions involved. Before treatments of temporality and the individuality of human beings and selves, a preparatory outline of the ontological and anthropological background is in order.

The story about the self in Plotinus' philosophy is based on three necessary starting points: the centrality of metaphysics, some kind of dualistic framework (although, as we shall see, Plotinus subscribes to a rather special branch of dualism), and the insights of the late Platonic dialogues, especially the *Timaeus*. Let me begin by making clear why this must be so.

It is a commonplace that within the thinking of most schools of ancient philosophy metaphysics held a central role, and that ontological questions were intertwined with the epistemological and the ethical. Metaphysics is 'first philosophy' because it is basic for all philosophical inquiry. Understanding the principles governing the universe, striving towards a realisation of essences, and determining the place of different things in a metaphysical and cosmological order form the backbone for all other lines of questioning. This conviction is strengthened by two assumptions, connected with a rather strong form of metaphysical realism. The universe is understood as having an order, and one that can, at least to some extent, be discovered. Intelligibility is understood as a property of that order – be it the order of reality as we know it or, as in Platonism, of a higher realm which the order of the sensible imitates.[3] Epistemology and philosophy of cognition are therefore firmly tied to ontology and cosmology.

In Plotinus, one could argue, this way of doing philosophy reaches its peak. It is certainly possible to inquire into his epistemology or philosophical psychology, but this always happens by means of metaphysics. Of the peculiar Neoplatonic metaphysical entities, the so-called hypostases[4] – that

[2] It is not my aim to write a history of philosophy of Neoplatonism, nor is this the right occasion to discuss the issue at any length. In any case, for centuries, the prevalent interpretation of Platonism was more or less a Neoplatonic reading, and through many Church Fathers, especially Augustine, Christian theology – and to an extent also Western thought in general – was influenced by Neoplatonism. Cf., e.g., Tigerstedt 1974; Cary 2000.

[3] Cf., e.g., Tuominen 2007 and forthcoming.

[4] It has become customary to call these levels hypostases, although, in fact, *hupostasis* is used by Plotinus to denote existence or existents more generally, whereas he often refers to these levels as principles, *archai*. What is meant are levels of reality explanatory for the realm of sense and matter. For the Neoplatonists, these levels stand in non-reciprocal dependence relations to one another. The 'lower' or more accurately posterior depends for its existence and content on the 'higher' or prior, and it always expresses a more detailed multiplicity than the prior. This structure is found in several relations

is, levels of hierarchical reality stretching from a transcendent cause, the One, through a succession of levels down to the material realm – the Intellect and the Soul are not merely separate metaphysical levels that interpret the creative emanation[5] from the One and act as causes and explanations for the things in the sensible universe. The significant insight of the Neoplatonists is to locate the metaphysical levels also in the soul, thus not only strengthening the connection between the human soul and the essential structure of the world but, and for my purposes even more importantly, rendering metaphysics directly explanatory for the mental and psychological functioning of a human being.

With this background in mind, it is easier to understand why it is primary for our inquiry to determine the ontological status of selves. As we shall see in the later chapters, this does not mean that the questions about consciousness, for instance, were insignificant or of secondary interest. In the end, these questions may be more illuminating about the nature of selfhood, and it is quite possible that ethical and therapeutic considerations have had motivational power in the formation of the theory.[6] Nonetheless, from a systematic point of view, whatever we learn about other aspects of the self is based on locating it in metaphysics, and this locating, as we will soon see, has certain consequences for other lines of questioning.

A basic feature that metaphysics reveals about Neoplatonic anthropology is that to be a human being is to exist on and in a sense encompass all metaphysical levels: the sensible realm of time and matter, and the hypostases, that is, the Soul, the Intellect and the One.[7] This means the following: (1) human beings are temporal and bodily things that exist, perceive and act in the realm of matter and sense. In addition to this, (2) they have souls which explain their living and cognitive functions. Moreover, (3) even higher than this level there is an intellect in each human soul. This intellect explains the

of Neoplatonic ontology, hypostases forming the backbone of that structure. While Plotinus is usually understood as postulating three hypostases – the One, the Intellect, and the Soul – later Neoplatonists postulated more levels. Also, the term hierarchy is of later usage. Plotinus does, however, use the term 'sequence' or 'chain' (*heirmos*) a couple of times. III.1.2.31; III.2.5.14. Cf. O'Meara 1975; 1996; Gerson 1994: esp. 3–4.

[5] I shall throughout use this perhaps unfortunate but customary term. One should bear in mind, however, that the sort of 'outpouring' in question does not diminish its source in any way, and that all material metaphors are in this context problematic.

[6] Hadot 2002 (following, to an extent, Rabbow 1954 and 1960) poses an interesting challenge to the common ways of interpreting ancient philosophy, and although he may overstate the significance of the 'way of life' and certainly underestimates that of argument and theory, his monograph illustrates well the ways in which argument and the philosophical way of life were different sides of one and the same endeavour.

[7] Wildberg 2002: 263. For the Platonic background (e.g., the *Parmenides*) of hypostases in general, cf. Dodds 1928; Szlezák 1979.

natural human capacity and inclination to rational thinking and especially its ideal end, the attainment of knowledge. And finally, (4) each human being is one by participating in the most simple and powerful principle of the hierarchy, the One. Of the levels, the One is not understood strictly as a part of human nature but as something with which we are nonetheless closely connected and which explains certain features of humanity: that we are unified and one, and that we are naturally disposed towards goodness.[8] The existence of all these levels in each human being also yields us the possibility of concentrating on one or more of these aspects, and thereby of gaining experiences that have different structural and phenomenal features (discussed, further, in later chapters). What concerns us here is the fact that a complete description and explanation of human nature necessarily includes all these levels.

However, it is equally true that the metaphysical hierarchy outlined above is also a hierarchy of value and priority. What is primary in reality can be found at the top of the hierarchy, and at each consecutive level the higher entity is always prior to the lower. The posterior is non-reciprocally dependent upon the prior for its existence and nature.[9] For anthropology and philosophy of the self, this has two important consequences. First, since the One is the most prior entity there is, unity and non-compositionality have unquestioned value. Simplest nature is, for example, the most self-sufficient because it is not dependent upon its parts (*autarkes*; II.9.1.8–12). We shall later see how this guides Plotinus' comments especially about ideal selfhood. Second, the levels of the Intellect and the Soul have more causal primacy and stand for better aspects of human nature than the embodied and extended aspects, although the latter, too, are indispensable for our being what we are. This leads us to the anthropocentrism and intellectualism of ancient philosophy. For most ancient philosophers, human beings are special because they have a rational soul, capable of penetrating to the essential structure of the universe. This aspect distinguishes humans from animals, and within a human being, too, it creates a domain of its own. In Platonism, a divide between our rational and animal nature is especially threatening.[10]

In the dialogue *Timaeus* – one which the Neoplatonists read with close attention – Plato posits for human souls the task of bringing illumination

[8] Human souls are metaphorically 'around' the One, they are other than it but come from it (ἕτερον θεοῦ ἐκείνη, ἐξ ἐκείνου δέ). VI.9.8.37, 41; 9.26–7. And the One is a productive power of all things without being one of them (V.2.1.1–7).

[9] E.g., III.2.1.21–6; V.2.2.24–9; cf. O'Meara 1996.

[10] Cf., e.g., the interpretation of Annas 1999: chapter 6.

to the perceptible universe.[11] This task has a twofold nature, for the universe has been created in such a way that human beings are able not only to achieve a perceptual and rational grasp of it, but also to complete its creation by their own actions. This, of course, raises them above other ordinary living creatures in the universe. The distinctive nature of a part of humanity, namely the soul and especially the rational part of it, is visible in the subtleties of the demiurgic creation depicted in the same dialogue. The creation shows a curious distance between body and soul: human souls are created by the Demiurge who leaves certain works to be completed by the lesser gods. The bodies as well as many functions of the soul necessary for embodied beings are created by these ancillary gods (*Ti.* 41d–e; 42d–3a). Nutrition, for example, is a feature brought into the composite by the bodies, and thus external to the individual human soul. Although the myth does bind soul and body closely together, thus giving a more monistic picture of human beings than some other of Plato's dialogues, it sows the first seeds for Plotinus' radical views about what lies within the true self and what is external to it.

For Plotinus, a particular human being is potentially disunified in several different ways. As a composite of soul and body, and of forms and matter, he is composed of two different kinds of things whose relation (as we shall see in chapter 4.2), are bound to be problematic.[12] With good reason, Plotinus can be considered a dualist with many of the problems dualism involves. He mounts several attacks on the materialist conceptions of the soul presented by the Stoics and the Epicureans.[13] Among his starting points are included the idea that some objects of the soul's cognitive functions, its thinking, are immaterial (or without magnitude, *megethos*), and therefore it is impossible for the subject of these thoughts to be material (IV.7.8.7–17), and the idea that the phenomenon of unified perceptual consciousness – that perceptions from different organs come together in the perceiving subject – can be explained solely by the immateriality of the soul.[14] Moreover, lifeless matter and an organic body need a principle of movement, and either one postulates the soul as the ultimate principle or one must

[11] E.g., *Ti.* 28b–c. My understanding of the dialogue has been shaped by Sarah Broadie's lectures (spring 2003, Oxford). According to Broadie, while Plato naturalised the elements, we must wait for Aristotle to naturalise the soul, that is, to formulate a theory about a nutritive and vegetative soul.

[12] Plotinus is worried among other things by the fact that the material body is destructible whereas the soul ought to be immortal (IV.7.1).

[13] IV.7.8–8[4]. Cf. Gerson 1994: chapter VII.1.

[14] For the latter idea, cf. Gerson 1994: 129–32; Emilsson 1991. I will come back to this issue in chapter 2.

go on infinitely in trying to find an external source of movement for the composite (IV.7.9.6–13).

So far, Plotinus' understanding of the soul–body relation is broadly in line with Aristotle's: both believe in the soul as an organisation that is not a physical feature of matter, as well as in psychic occurrences that do not have a clear material basis – in today's parlance, in non-physical mental events.[15] But for Plotinus, soul is not primarily a functional organisation of the body that enables the body to carry out processes that are constitutive of life for a particular type of living being. In addition to holding that the soul is an immaterial entity, he follows Plato's views in the *Phaedo* in believing in the possibility of soul's existence separate from the body and in general in its being a thing that does not depend on matter or material features. Soul is not dependent or supervenient[16] on physical features – rather, at the most basic level, souls cause and give rise to them. As pure privation, matter belongs to a lower level of the metaphysical hierarchy, and cannot explain or cause the features on a higher level.[17] Some of the soul's different faculties, aspects or parts are admittedly more closely tied to the functions of the perishing and changing body, and are thus dependent upon it for their actualisation, but the true causal relations are always from the top downwards. The body has, in Plotinus' words, a shadow or trace of the soul (*skia*), and this presence makes it an entity suitable for living and conscious functions.[18] Furthermore, he takes very seriously Aristotle's passing and perhaps even reluctant suggestions that there is an aspect of the soul, the higher intellection, *nous* (verb *noein)*, which is somehow independent of matter and the body.[19]

It has been pointed out that the kind of dualism proposed shares many features with Cartesian dualism: the soul is understood, if not as *res cogitans*, nonetheless primarily as that which is capable of cognition and reasoning. Body is understood as physical, and physical, in turn, as extensional. Cognition and reasoning are not characterised as material or extended processes,

[15] An interpretation by Heinaman 1990 suggests that Aristotle's theory of the soul–body relation bears dualistic features. This is, among other things, because the soul is related to the body in the following manner: 'a form which is not an immediate structural or physical feature of matter but is supervenient and dependent for its existence on immediate physical features of matter'(90–1).

[16] The term supervenience is somewhat difficult in the context of ancient philosophy. It is sometimes used as a translation for the Greek verb *epigignesthai*, and thus in a quite specific sense, and sometimes more loosely to denote a characteristic or property which is not identical to or logically entailed by lower-level properties, but which nonetheless rises above (*super-*) them. Here, I am using it in the latter, loose sense.

[17] II.4.16.4; cf. II.5.5. [18] IV.4.18.1–9.

[19] Cf. *De an.* 413b24–9; 430a10–25. For an argument that for Aristotle, even *nous*'s functioning is not entirely separate from the body, see Modrak 1991. For intellection in Plotinus, cf. chapter 3.

and at least theoretical thinking of pure essences is not even dependent upon the extended body.[20] For Plotinus, as we shall see in chapters 3 and 4, indubitability is not a mark of the mental; he is, nonetheless, interested in the immediacy and indubitability of certain mental functions. Yet the picture is hardly one of two separate substances. Without souls and forms, there would be no bodies. Souls and their formal power generate, organise and constitute bodies as true unities. For the soul to come to have the kind of existence that we perceive in the sensible world, a place is needed, and for this purpose the soul generates the body. The presence of a soul is more necessary than the steersman's presence in the ship: without it, there would be no ship.[21]

Two things are at stake: the causal relations between soul and body, and the unity of the composite living and thinking subject. As for the former, Plotinus has an elaborate way of explaining the soul's presence everywhere as an immaterial entity (and hence not subject to the same restrictions as the material things), and the way in which the body is 'in the soul' rather than the other way around.[22] These explanations are likely to be far from adequate as a solution for the mind–body problem, but they have some explanatory force internal to the Neoplatonic system: given the overall causal and explanatory directions, the body is not a separate substance but generated by the soul. As for the latter problem, the unity of the subject, Plotinus seems to bite the bullet and identify the self with one aspect of the organism, its soul or reason, rather than with the organism as a whole. This will not, of course, solve all the problems about embodied subjectivity, but it brings metaphysics in line with, for example, Plotinus' therapeutic recommendations (to be discussed in chapter 4.2). Moreover, Plotinus' main interest is not in the body–soul distinction. It looks as if individuals are composites of matter and two souls, and this doctrine gives rise to a whole different kind of dualism.

Matter has 'first' been ensouled by that soul which produces the animal life in the first place – probably the soul of the All also responsible for all other formations of matter – and only then by the individual soul. In this,

[20] Cf. Emilsson 1988: esp. 146; 1991; Dillon 1990.

[21] For this order of primacy, e.g., IV.3.9, esp. lines 22–3. Cf. Clark 1996: 277–81. Sen 2000: 421 calls this reverse epiphenomenalism. The body is a projection of and remains causally dependent on the soul. The way the formal power is present in bodies will be more closely studied in section 1.2 below. For the steersman–ship analogy, Arist. *De an.* 413a8–9. Plotinus thinks that it is illuminating, in so far as it presents the captain as separate from the ship, but that it is problematic because it misrepresents the way in which the soul is present in the body (IV.3.21.5–8).

[22] IV.3.20–3 (esp. 20.38–51). Here he is employing, among other things, the discussion between Socrates and Parmenides in the first part of the *Parmenides*. For the soul–body relationship in Plotinus, cf. O'Meara 1985.

Plotinus combines the above-related account of the *Timaeus*' two-source creation of human beings with Aristotle's idea that the body is ensouled, so to speak, on several levels. On one level, matter is ensouled to form a body that has organs, that potentially has life. On the next level, it will actually have life, because it has soul as its actuality.[23] In the Plotinian account, the very first stage is responsible for bodily formations. During a further stage of the same ensoulment, individuals receive their vegetative functions. The first ensoulment is largely responsible for our being and living, whereas a second ensoulment by an individual soul is said to make only some contributions to our being by its reasoning capacity, and is, rather, the cause of our happiness.[24] It is also called the ensoulment through which we are ourselves (*kath' hēn hēmeis*; II.1.5.21). Since all souls are in an important sense one, that is, all souls – the soul of the All included – have the same basic structure as their source, the hypostasis Soul to which they are connected, it might be argued that there is, here too, only a single ensoulment which occurs in phases. At times Plotinus also refers to the lower functions of the soul as perceiving soul, nutritive soul etc. thus talking about them in the Aristotelian manner.[25] In any case, as we shall see later, his views about what is internal and what is external to the self reiterate, to some extent, the distinction originally drawn from the *Timaeus*, thus emphasising the dual nature of humanity at the expense of a more monistic account. At least to an extent, the soul animating the physical is differentiated from whatever is the proper, individual soul.[26]

It is already manifest that Plotinus is pushed towards a theory of two selves: on the one hand, that residing in the composite, and on the other hand, the primary, pure and rational self. As he puts it, every human being is twofold: a composite and a real self, *the* self (*ho men to sunamphoteron ti, ho de autos*; II.3.9.30–1).[27] By necessity, souls are such that they descend into bodies and live two different kinds of lives, that of the pure intellect and that of the composite (IV.8.4.31–5). Contrary to a rather common intuition, each embodied human being does not have just one but rather two selves. An

[23] IV.3.7.8–13. In Aristotle (*De an.* 412a19-b6), both levels belong to the same soul. Cf. e.g., Whiting 1992. Further, Aristotle maintains that as the body is developed before the soul, the irrational part of the soul is developed before the rational part (*Pol.* 1334b20–8).

[24] II.1.5.18–23; IV.3.27.1–3; VI.7.7.8–16. Whether they also get perceptive functions is a matter of controversy. For the perceptive faculty, cf. Emilsson 1988: 26–7.

[25] IV.3.4.15–21; 22.32–40.

[26] Kalligas 2000.

[27] Cf. Gerson 1994: 140–6. The double nature of the self is implicit in some passages of Plato, as is the idea that the soul is some kind of inner self or person, distinct from the body, and more genuinely a self than the composite. Pl. *Resp*. 589a–c, *Phd*. 66b–67e; 115c–d, cf. Gerson 2002, e.g., 243.

embodied person lives in the sensible and material world, his consciousness mostly filled by sense-perceptions and thoughts about the world he lives in. His bodily nature, with its needs, desires and pleasures arising from the encounters with the world, ties him further to his surroundings. The same person has reason and even a paradigm of it, a perfect intellect. This intellect, as will be explicated in chapters 3 and 4.2, is independent of this world, thinking solely of the eternal essences and thereby pure ontological truths.[28] Its consciousness is not mixed with perceptions. Plotinus claims further that the unmixed and unworldly life of the intellect is not merely the principle of our thought or our possibility of knowledge but both the true self as well as the normative ideal that every human being ought to strive towards.[29] We should not be too attached to the composite nor to the life it leads because actually 'we', that is, the self, is not the whole of it, but the dominant part (*hēmeis de kata to kurion*; IV.4.18.11–15) – the higher or the inner soul.[30] We have a dualism of two selves rather than of mere soul and body.

In what follows, I will inquire into reasons and motivations for this view on a more general level than that of the soul–body relation (to be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.2). I will argue that it finds support in a metaphysical distinction central to Plato – or at least, in Plotinus' interpretation of it – but rarely brought up in this connection. This distinction, discussed in the first part of this chapter, is the one between forms and particulars, and the kind of unity and identity entities belonging to the two kinds are capable of having. The embodied selfhood is grounded on Plotinus' general understanding of particulars. The chapter provides a theory of *temporal and eternal entities* – a distinction that differentiates qualifiedly also between embodied and higher selfhood. In the latter part of the chapter I shall enter into an old controversy as to whether Plotinus postulated forms of *individuals*, asking what it is that enables human beings to exist individually and to be identified as individuals. It will be claimed that here, too, the two aspects of the self, the composite of soul and body and the immaterial and non-bodily rational soul, acquire quite different treatments from Plotinus.

[28] The intellect thinks essences in a very peculiar manner, by becoming identical with them. In this context, thus, 'true' and 'truth' must be understood ontologically (in ways to be explicated in chapter 3) rather than semantically.

[29] This normativity is already visible in the ontology of things, but becomes more evident in the discussion on self-sufficiency in chapter 4.2.

[30] In this, he is true to the Platonic *Alcibiades* I (129d–130c) where the self is identified as the soul rather than the body or even the composite.

1.1. ETERNAL ENTITIES AND TEMPORAL PARTICULARS

There seems to be no doubt that human beings are individuals: they are among those basic items, particulars, that we suppose and identify when we arrange the world of our experience.[31] But to be an individual can be understood in several different ways, of which some can be considered as more significant to individuation than others. In addition to being basic, individuals are often regarded as belonging to the set of countable items. We often also identify as particulars things that are, at least to a certain extent, determinate and unified: not a continuous mass the parts of which are, say, homogeneous, but something that has differentiated parts and a recognisable form or structure that gives it unity – ships or statues being paradigmatic examples, rather than an indeterminate amount of bronze or wood. Particulars are further identified as separate and independent from ourselves and from other entities, and by appealing to their self-identity: a statue is an individual if it can be distinguished from its environment and other statues, and if it is the same as itself both at a time and over some time.[32] Interestingly enough, as was pointed out in the introduction, one terminological candidate for a Greek notion 'self', that is, *ho autos* (e.g., *autos ho Sōkratēs*, 'Socrates himself') is etymologically closely associated with sameness and identity, *autos* meaning also 'same'.[33]

One objective of the first chapter *in toto* is to consider whether and how human beings and selves are individuals for Plotinus. In Greek terminology, the issue is *kath' hekaston*, that is, what is singly, a particular, or an individual.[34] I am looking for answers to the following group of questions: How does Plotinus explain the determinate and unified nature of particulars? How are they individuated from each other? Are they self-identical in the above sense? And finally, are human individuals basic for him? I will proceed by starting with general questions about particulars, and explicate the common ground human individuals share with any spatio-temporal particulars. I will then proceed to questions that pertain to ensouled things and especially human beings.

[31] It is, for instance, instructive that in Aristotle's *Categories* the standard example of a subject of predication is 'this man' (*Cat.* 1a20–2; 1b12–13; 2a13). Note that I use 'individual' and 'particular' almost interchangeably. Sometimes, however, the choice to use 'individual' refers especially to the context of individuation of countable items, and could, thus, also hold of universals like beauty, whereas the use of 'particular' rules out universals and refers, in this chapter, most often to solid and structured items in the world of sense and matter.

[32] For individuals in general, cf. Strawson 1959; in Plato: McCabe 1994.

[33] Thesleff forthcoming.

[34] Plotinus uses the term in several contexts, discussing the particularity of things, abstract entities, human beings, souls etc. Cf. Sleeman and Pollet 1980: 520–1. As we shall see, not all these entities are individuals in the same sense or fashion.

In this first part, I will claim that the two selves are separated by the fact that the composite is an entity in time, whereas the intellectual soul is eternal. The composite is not just perishable, but it is in continuous flux. Therefore the material, or as a Platonist might put it, the sensible realm, and its objects are not unities in the same way as timeless[35] things, like forms, are. This will lead to two different accounts of unity, identity and selfhood.

As we shall later see, many normative and evaluative statements that Plotinus makes in other areas of his philosophy result from, or at the very least connect with, the problematic nature of human individuals at the ontological level. The general nature of temporal and bodily particulars is enough to render embodied selfhood deeply problematic. The chapter will thus perform two functions, first to explicate the ontological selfhood to which Plotinus seems committed, and second to pave the way for the themes and problems discussed in the later chapters.

The question[36]

Regardless of the rapidly growing field of research on numerous philosophical aspects of Plotinus, very little has been said about his account of the sensible universe, and especially of its entities, ordinary particulars. Following the rhetorical scorn of many passages where Plotinus compares the sensible with the intelligible, particulars are often treated by scholars as unimportant images of real beings, the forms, or – in the case of living beings – troublesome carriers of more worthy beings, namely souls.[37] The present inquiry will try to show that the oversight has been considerable, and that despite Plotinus' relegation to a certain unreality of what Aristotle, for instance, thought of as reality, he has a thoughtful account of sensible particulars. This account is based on Platonic intuitions about the profound ontological difference between forms and particulars. Plotinus' own contribution, I will argue, is centred around the question 'What is it to be a thing in time?' He is puzzled by the resilient dilemma of how to accommodate change and persistence, as well as by what makes ordinary particulars determinate entities and what kind of unity they are entitled to.

[35] I will use the terms 'timeless', 'eternal' and 'beyond time' very freely, trying to avoid becoming enmeshed in the discussion on whether eternity is an eternal present or a timeless eternity.

[36] From here on until the end of section I.I., this chapter reiterates Remes 2005 (only small changes have been made). Apart from people mentioned in the acknowledgements, I am grateful to David Sedley and Inna Kupreeva for comments and discussion on this particular section, as well as to *OSAPh* for the permission to republish the article in this context.

[37] There are exceptions: Rist 1967: chapter 8; Corrigan 1996b; Wagner 1996.

The theme of the nature of particulars in the realm of time and matter also leads the present-day scholar to the following query: What kind of notion(s) of identity – if any – is Plotinus operating with? Like Plato and Aristotle, he often uses the notion of same (*tauton*). As a conceptual tool in this discussion I will use Aristotle's distinction (*Top.* 103a ff.) between what is numerically identical and identical in species or genus.[38] It is legitimate to expect Plotinus to have been familiar with this distinction, and as we shall see, he does seem to make some explicit use of it.

My purpose here is to explore two kinds of unity and identity and the rather unusual account of persistence that I interpret Plotinus as proposing. According to Plotinus, things in the sensible realm are not just perishable, but unreal and in flux. Objects in the sensible realm are extended and composed of matter, but their unity, individuality, structure and properties are due to the soul and participation in forms. They are images or shadows of forms, and thus have no real claim to the status of substance, nor to that of the subject of predication (e.g., II.6.1.40–9; 2.11–14; VI.2.7.12–14; VI.3.8.30–7). They are *quasi*-substances that imitate real substances (VI.3.8.32). Owing both to their material and to their temporal nature, the persisting things merely imitate the true identity and unity of the forms. However, although particulars are neither paradigmatically one, nor self-identical across time, they do have a special way of existing and persisting as unified and determinate things. This understanding relies on two different accounts of unity, depending on whether the subject matter at hand is the items in the sensible realm or the forms in the intelligible. I will claim that entities in time are *one in continuity*, that is, unities that consist of parts. In addition to being and consisting of spatial parts of the extended universe, they have parts that come to be and perish. As we shall see, Plotinus comes very close to claiming that ordinary particulars are composed of temporal parts.

Plotinus discusses particulars in several places, the most important being the third treatise of the sixth *Ennead* on the kinds of being (VI.3.[44]). Most of the novel material to be presented in the context of particulars comes from the *Ennead* on eternity and time (III.7.[45]) in which Plotinus, in addition to giving his general account of the realms of time and eternity, offers several indications of the nature of things that belong to the respective realms. The present study combines the approaches of these two treatises, and, although the argument will not rely on the point, it is noteworthy that

[38] Note that there has been some controversy on whether Aristotle can be said to have a concept of identity in something like the Leibnizian sense. Matthews 1982; White 1971: 189–91.

the latter follows the former in the chronological order of the treatises. It is legitimate to expect Plotinus to continue, in the later treatise, to develop questions opened up in course of the earlier. He draws our attention to the fact that the nature of particulars can hardly be treated exhaustively without taking into consideration their temporal character.

Being and becoming

That Plotinus worries about the nature, unity and identity of sensible objects is evident from the following passage:

> For some bodily things are by nature *flowing with respect to individuality* because the form is brought from outside and existence/being arises always according to a form, in imitation of the [really] existing things, but in others, since they are *not produced by composition*, the existence of each is in that which is, *numerically one* (*arithmō hen*), which is there from the beginning, and does not become what it was not and will not cease to be what it is.[39] (IV.3.8.24–30)

Two kinds of things are mentioned: the kind which has a 'flowing individuality' and 'becomes what it was not and ceases to be what it is', and the kind that does not become what it was not and will not cease to be what it is. The distinction is made between things that come to have properties and lose others, and those that do not acquire or lose properties – that is, things that change and things that do not.

The concepts used in this passage raise several interesting questions: What is the nature of things that have a 'flowing individuality'? What kind of flux does Plotinus have in mind? What exactly does he mean by things that are produced *by composition* and those that are *numerically one*? On a general level, the distinction made is between bodily things, that is, ordinary sensible particulars, and the really existing things, forms. The unity of eternal things is somehow superior to the unity of bodily particulars, since, as Plotinus says, they are not produced by composition. He deliberately uses Heraclitean terminology. The entities in time have a strange kind of nature and persistence: everything bodily 'flows' and has its nature in continual movement or production (IV.7.3.19; I.8.4.5). But of course not everything is in flux. There are things that, like souls and forms,

[39] τοῖς μὲν γὰρ τῶν σωμάτων τῇ φύσει τοῦ καθ' ἕκαστον ῥέοντος ἅτε ἐπακτοῦ τοῦ εἴδους ὄντος τὸ εἶναι κατ' εἶδος ἀεὶ ὑπάρχει μιμήσει τῶν ὄντων, τοῖς δὲ ἅτε οὐκ ἐκ συνθέσεως οὖσι τὸ εἶναι ἐστιν ἐν τῷ ὅ ἐστιν ἀριθμῷ ἓν, ὅπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπάρχει, καὶ οὔτε γίνεται ὃ μὴ ἦν, οὔτε ὅ ἐστιν οὐκ ἔσται. The translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own to the extent that I have translated them from the Greek originals, but being a non-native speaker of English, I have sometimes resorted to A. Armstrong's more eloquent phrases.

have an identity and persistence superior to the former.[40] The metaphysical distinction between that which always is and that which comes to be but never really is is familiar to us from Plato. Let us next survey in brief some of its motivations, and especially one interpretation that will provide a useful background for the inquiry into Plotinian particulars.

Plato's ontology, it may be argued, allows for two different kinds of things, forms and particulars. While forms are independent, that is, they are what they are in virtue of themselves, particulars are dependent on forms, and their participation in forms gives them their distinctive, dependent kind of being. The distinction raises several philosophical and interpretative problems. On a cautious reading, Platonic particulars resemble Aristotelian particulars in having a determinate and stable existence. Although forms are the true essences, particulars, too, have stability, reality and permanence.[41] According to a different construal, while the forms *are* essences and can truly be said to have being, particulars lack essence and being. They are composed of images of forms, and this collection changes in time. It has even been suggested that particulars are mere bundles of properties since none of the properties is such that it would survive all the changes the material particulars undergo.[42] In the *Timaeus*, the realm of becoming is said to come to be and pass away but never really be, and similarly the things in it are things that come to be (*Ti.* 28a; cf. *Resp.* 534a). This 'coming into being' does not mean just that sensible objects are generated and perish. They are changing things, capable of having contrary properties at different stages of their existence through time, and even the elements they are made of may constantly be changing into one another (*Ti.* 49c ff.).[43]

For the purposes of this chapter, I wish to concentrate on the approach that interprets particulars as lacking essence and being. If one takes this kind of reading as correct in its broad outline, there is still considerable disagreement over how deep a change the particulars undergo and to what extent they and the elements can be said to be in flux, i.e., how Heraclitean Plato is in the end concerning this issue. Perhaps the material particulars change all of their properties at each moment, perhaps some of their properties at each

[40] For souls, III.7.11.58–63; for forms, II.1.1, 2; V.9.5.

[41] Owen 1986: 71–3; Irwin 1977; Cooper 1990: chapter 3, esp. 93.

[42] Silverman 2002. Cf. Cherniss 1977: chapters 21 and 23; Mills 1968: 145–70. For some passages in Plato as well as for their interpretation: *Tht.* 209c, cf. MacDowell 1973: 255; Sorabji 1988: 45; Moravcsik 1960; Hamlyn 1955; *Symp.* 207d4–e5, cf. Sorabji 1999; *Phlb.* 14 ff.; 16 c ff., cf. Hamlyn 1955; Bluck 1957: 181–6.

[43] There is a problem, however, concerning how to read this together with the latter part of the *Timaeus* in which everything seems to consist of elementary geometrical parts. Cf. Silverman 2002: chapter 7.

moment, or all or some of their properties over time. If particulars have some properties that are essential to them and which they retain throughout their existence, there is no true flux, and the identification and individuation of the particular happens by identifying the essential properties in question. Recently, Allan Silverman[44] has argued that while Plato does not opt for total flux, his particulars do change some of their properties at each moment and all of their properties over time. The Aristotelian distinction between essential and accidental properties should not, thus, be read into Platonism. A Platonic particular consists of a changing bundle of copies of forms.

There are two problems with bundles: unity and change. If there are no essential properties, the theory must explain what makes the particular thing that particular thing and what unifies the collection of properties to one determinate entity. And if the bundle is identified with the constituents of the bundle, does it exist only as long as *all* the constituents remain the same? Even if Platonic particulars were considered bundles of properties, it is possible for them to have some kind of unity and continuity: again according to Silverman, the *Timaeus*' new explanatory entity, the receptacle, makes it possible to individuate and study these things that otherwise had no real claim to stable and identifiable objecthood and unity. The geometrisation and the *regionalisation* of the receptacle secure determinate places in which the form-images may be manifested. Particulars are discrete objects because they occupy a certain region of the receptacle. The theory satisfactorily explains individuation, persistence and change of particulars, and its only major defect is the inexplicable – or primitive – way in which geometrical and regionalised configurations coincide with form-copies that enter and exit the places endowed by the former.[45]

Regardless of whether this interpretation of Plato is correct or not, it helps us single out the central problems involved: (1) What are the basic ontological categories and their dependence relations? (2) What kind of being do the entities in these categories enjoy? (3) What individuates and unifies the entities in different categories? Plotinus' answers, as one might have guessed at this point, are not wholly different from those provided by the above interpretation. He continues the discussions of the late dialogues, but the post-Platonic interest in the philosophy of time and in continuants allows him to go beyond Plato in his analysis of temporal objects.[46] Before

[44] Silverman 2002: 257 ff. [45] Silverman 2002: 282.

[46] In III.7.7 ff. Plotinus considers different understandings of time probably belonging to Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans.

concentrating on his original contribution, let us see his version of the being–becoming distinction.

In the treatise *On the Kinds of Being*, Plotinus raises a question concerning what kind of being the sense objects and their elements have. Right from the beginning it is clear that they are not substances or essences (*ousiai*) in the true sense of the word. At most, this kind is only homonymously *ousia*, or, better yet, a becoming, *genesis* (VI.3.2.1–4). Against Aristotle in the *Categories*, Plotinus denies that sensible particulars could be basic realities. Not only are they not substances but there is nothing in them that is substance. They are affections (*pathē*) of substance (II.6.1.48–52). A particular is a *conglomerate* of matter and qualities (*sumphorēsis*; VI.3.8.20),[47] and since matter does not qualify as a substance but is unreal and bears its qualities like the mirror reflects images (cf. e.g., III.6.13.35), particulars remain unreal. Rather than generating *ousia*, *genesis* articulates it in the realm of time and matter.

Particulars are wholly dependent entities that lack essence. Their peculiar and deficient way of being is to shadow and articulate the true beings, the forms. The question now becomes what, for Plotinus, renders the conglomerates unified and discrete particulars of a certain sort. In so far as Plotinus interprets the receptacle of the *Timaeus* as matter, he gives it a much less significant role in the coming to be of sensible particulars. *Materia prima* has no positive power of any sort. Like Aristotle's matter, it is capable only of receiving and adapting to any formation (e.g., II.4.11.38–43). The things that come to be in it are images reflected on what itself is a mere image. Even size and extension in general as well as particular sizes come from the formal principles.[48] That the process by which copies or images of forms come to be reflected on matter is not random is guaranteed by the Soul of the All, or the so-called World Soul. Determinacy of particular things is due, first, to the organisation and regionalisation of the universe into discrete bodies by the World Soul which governs the body of the universe, its elements and the kind of bodies there are by its rational forming principle, *logos*, and, second, in the case of at least human beings, by the individual souls that further organise (in ways not specified by the passage) and determine the properties of the thing in question (VI.7.7.8–16). In spite of their dependence on

[47] Plotinus does not use the term *athroisma*. In claiming that the soul's nature was such that it did not want to create everything at once, collectively, he does use the term *athroos* (III.7.11.22; cf. III.7.8.50–1).

[48] Each thing acquires magnitude as a result of the power of the forms, and 'makes its own place' (III.6.17; for *chōra* esp. lines 27–9). Matter has relevance only insofar as it is the cause of ugliness and failure (e.g., I.8.14.40–50).

forms and soul(s), the resulting ordinary particulars are *quasi*-substances in the sense that they function as subjects and objects in causal relations of the sensible realm (VI.3.4.36–7). Because of the organisation given to them by forms and soul(s), they are stable and unified enough for this purpose.

By now it is clear that, for Plotinus, unity and determinacy of particulars is solely due to forms, and souls acting as intermediaries in the asymmetrical relation between matter and formal power – the latter including forms as well as their expressions, *logoi*, at each level in the descending *scalae* of emanation and plenitude. One reason why particulars are not substances is located in matter and the special – and deficient – way it can receive formal power. The way the sensible realm mirrors true substances is deficient in that it unfolds what is unified into several images (II.6.1.8–12). I take this to refer to Plotinus' contention that an individual human being consists of parts or properties like rationality, humanity and living being, and of many others in addition (VI.9.2.17–20). Of the properties, those that are due to one form, like two-footed and other specifically human properties, are together and inseparable in the intelligible but separable from the point of view of the sensible. The properties appear unfolded and separated in the sensible, and even human reason rarely understands them in their full unity. Moreover, properties are unfolded so as to conform to the constraints of extended corporeality. It is impossible for two bodies to be in the same place, that is, for example for hands and feet to occupy the same bit of matter at the same time, and it is impossible for incompatible properties like snubness and aquilinity of nose to be present in the same body. Perceptible sizes and masses that occupy their own place are called 'primarily divisible' (*prōtōs merista*; IV.1.1.11–17; IV.4.16.6–20; V.9.12).

This brings us to the final preliminary question, that of essential properties. While Plotinus is claiming that particulars are mere conglomerates of matter and unfolded properties, he also treats some properties as more important than others. He distinguishes properties that he calls 'completions of essence' (*sumplērōtika ousias*) from qualities (*poion, poiotēs*). Completions are those properties without which the entity would not be that particular (kind of) entity that it is. Qualities are either properties that in some other particular could be completing properties but are not that in the particular in question, or mere qualities, namely properties that are never completions (II.6.2). In the end, then, there are properties in the conglomerate that are vital to the explanation of what makes this particular the thing it is, and therefore have a privileged status. This is a somewhat strange idea. Why would a real essence need to be 'completed'? What is completed must be not the essence itself – i.e. the form – but the sensible quasi-substances

which consist of properties and matter. The completing properties are not substantial for two reasons. First, like all properties, they are mere appearances of forms and not instances of the forms themselves. Second, none of these properties alone makes the thing what it is. Plotinus argues that the sensible quasi-substances are made out of non-substances. Against both the Aristotelians and the Stoics[49] he maintains that what makes a sensible substance is not an essential property but the *whole* conjunction of properties (VI.3.8.27–37).

At the outset, the distinction between completing properties and qualities looks promising for the attempt to explain change and persistence. Identity through time could be identity in the strict, Aristotelian sense of numerical identity: the completions form the core which endures through the existence of the particular. As we shall see, however, while Plotinus allows that particulars have a stable existence, he doubts whether they have anything that remains strictly identical through time.

Eternal beings and temporal particulars

In the chronological order of the treatises, after discussing properties, Plotinus dictated the treatise on time and eternity (the 44th and 45th treatises of the *Enneads*). At first sight, it might seem that this is a rather sudden change of topic. However, while the topics of time and eternity certainly entail a new line of questioning, Plotinus is also continuing a theme of the previous inquiry. This theme is the division of temporal and extended particulars as contrasted with the unity of the forms. From the very beginning, treatise III.7 talks of time and eternity in terms of change and stability, so that it is legitimate to expect Plotinus' account to tell us something interesting also of the realm that changes, and ultimately of the things that change. I will dwell on eternity and eternal entities, the forms, for quite some time because the things that come to be are both likenesses of them and contrasted with them.

Plotinus talks about eternity as if it were one individual or object, although of a very peculiar kind. Although he denies that eternity boils down to the unity of the whole intelligible realm, he does seem to endorse the view that they are very closely related.[50] In any case, his inquiry starts from the realms – namely, the realm of the Platonic forms and the realm of time and matter. Moreover, he does this in terms of unity and

[49] For a recent study on this issue, cf. Kupreeva 2003.

[50] The later Neoplatonists Proclus and Damascius reproached him for making eternity simply the realm of intelligible entities (Simpl. in *Phys*. 791.32 ff.). Cf. Smith 1996: 198–9.

completeness.[51] The eternal realm stands for everything that exists or could exist. Eternal reality consists 'in the impossibility of any future diminution and the fact that nothing non-existent could be added to it' (III.7.4.37–40). Eternity is like a life which always has everything present to it at once. It does not change, but is a 'partless completion' (*telos ameres*) (III.7.3.15–23). This partlessness does not mean that it does not have any non-spatio-temporally distinguishable parts – after all, the multiplicity of forms belongs to the eternal realm – but that nothing of it passes away or comes into being because it is always wholly the same. It does not have any parts that it could be without, nor, being complete, does it lack any part that it could later acquire. Its being beyond change is described, further, as its being unshakeable and the same or self-identical (*tauton*), and possessing everything (*atremes*,[52] *tauton*, *echei to pan*; III.7.5.21; 6.36).[53]

Like eternity, the intelligible realm of being is always in the same state, neither coming to be nor perishing (VI.5.2.13–16). It seems almost as if eternity belonged to that realm because of its completeness, because there could not be any kind of change that would push the eternal realm into movement and time. In its completeness, the intelligible realm is static and eternal. Perhaps this is what Plotinus means when in III.7.4 he attempts to argue that eternity is neither accidental nor external to the intelligible but comes about from it, with it (lines 2–3). The eternal entities, in turn, are analogical to the whole realm of eternity. They are things that are and do not come to be or pass away. These unchangeable realities[54] are characterised by Plotinus as having an unceasing and selfsame (*tauton*) activity. Their existence, which is thought[55] and life, does not proceed from one thing to another (*ouk ex allou eis allo*), but is always in like manner and without discontinuities (III.7.3.12–15). Every eternal thing resembles the whole of eternity in being complete in its existence. Elsewhere he describes the forms as remaining in self-identity (*en tautotēti menousēs*; V.9.5.40).

Both eternity itself and each intelligible thing in it are always wholly actual (e.g., V.9.10.14). In the corporeal universe, only parts or partial powers and 'potentialities' of forms may be actualised because in that realm everything cannot be actual in the same place, nor at once (IV.1.1.13–17; IV.4.16.6–20). Time eradicates some of the material constraints by making it possible for the same thing to be white and not white at different times,

[51] E.g., Beierwaltes 1967: 188. [52] For the same term, cf. Parmenides fr. 8.4.
[53] For the sense in which eternity might be used, see Sorabji 1983: 112–14.
[54] These are in this context the genera of intelligible being, namely being, motion, rest, sameness and difference, that is, not the 'ordinary' Platonic forms, but the 'greatest kinds' of the *Sophist*.
[55] The Neoplatonic intelligibles are fully actual and in a sense thinking themselves, but this peculiarity need not concern us here.

but it also forms a further constraint – or order – upon the actualisation of properties. A man[56] cannot be both young and old at the same time, and youth will have to precede old age in the order of time. Different potentialities of forms will be actualised at different times. The eternal intelligible has no similar constraints. Thus its being is being eternally wholly actual. Eternity itself is called 'a partless completion' (*telos ameres*; III.7.3.19), and eternal entities have 'completion of existence' (*to teleon tou einai*; V.6.6.17). They are partless in the same sense, namely as not being divided by or in space, nor in time. They have 'fullness of being' eternally (*plēres to einai*; V.6.6.20). In the eternal realm the existence of things does not include any breaks or discontinuities (*apaustos, adiastatos*; III.7.3.13,15).

Time is defined as the life of the soul, a moving image of eternity. The realm in time is the realm of becoming. Its existence is depicted as continuous coming into being (*Ti.* 37d6–38c; Plot. *Enn*. III.7.11.19; V.1.4.18). The activities of the universe in time are not simultaneous but performed one after another (e.g., III.7.4.30). Soul, Plotinus says, presents one activity after another:

> For as Soul presents one of its activities after another, and then again another in ordered succession, it produces the succession (*ephexēs*)[57] along with activity, and advances with another thought (*dianoia*) coming after that [which it had before], to that which did not previously exist because that discursive thought (*hē dianoia*) was not actualised, and Soul's present life is not like that which came before it. So at the same time the life is different and this 'different' has a different time. So that expansion (*diastasis*)[58] of life involves time; life's continual progress involves continuity of time, and life which is past involves past time. So would it be sense to say that time is 'the life of the soul in progressive movement from one life to another'?[59] (III.7.11.35–45)

[56] Mankind, including womankind, is naturally inferred here and throughout this text.

[57] In *Physics*, Aristotle gives definitions of the terms continuous (*sunechēs*), contiguous (*haptomenon*) and successive (*ephexēs*; 231a21–4). It seems, however, that Plotinus does not follow this distinction consistently. Sometimes the terms are used as equivalents (III.1.4). He also has his own usages to *ephexēs*, often used in the context of divisions following emanation (IV.3.59).

[58] Note Plotinus' choice of wording: *diastasis* can mean distance, extension and dimension as well as something more like a temporal interval, thus conveniently comprising both extended and temporal aspects of what Plotinus is describing here.

[59] τὴν γὰρ ἐνέργειαν αὐτῆς παρεχομένη ἄλλην μετ' ἄλλην, εἶϑ' ἑτέραν πάλιν ἐφεξῆς, ἐγέννα τε μετὰ τῆς ἐνεργείας τὸ ἐφεξῆς καὶ συμπροήσει μετὰ διανοίας ἑτέρας μετ'ἐκείνην τὸ μὴ πρότερον ὄν, ὅτι οὐδ'ἡ διάνοια ἐνεργηϑεῖσα ἦν οὐδ'ἡ νῦν ζωὴ ὁμοία τῇ πρὸ αὐτῆς. ἅμα οὖν ζωὴ ἄλλη καὶ τὸ «ἄλλη» χρόνον εἶχεν ἄλλον. διάστασις οὖν ζωῆς χρόνον εἶχε καὶ τὸ πρόσω ἀεὶ τῆς ζωῆς χρόνον ἔχει ἀεὶ καὶ ἡ παρελϑοῦσα ζωὴ χρόνον ἔχει παρεληλυϑότα. εἰ οὖν χρόνον τις λέγοι ψυχῆς ἐν κινήσει μεταβατικῇ ἐξ ἄλλου εἰς ἄλλον βίον ζωὴν εἶναι, ἆρ'ἂν δοκοῖ τι λέγειν; The last sentence of the translation follows the translation of Strange 1994: 49. Note also Damascius who claims that 'soul does not embrace the totality of time at once as is the case with the higher soul', *in Parm.* II. 252,30 (Ruelle).

Although the Greek does not actually contain a corresponding word for the term 'stage', the different kinds succeeding one another referred to in the text could well be interpreted as different stages of life. Life unfolds in stages, and these stages are stages both of time and of life. Each stage of life involves or has a different time.

The interpretation of this passage depends on the overall view of time that one takes Plotinus to hold. It is crucial whether one attributes one or two notions of time to him. Some scholars have suggested that Plotinus distinguished between real time and manifested time. Manifested time, or the realm in time, can be measured by motions, e.g., of the heavenly bodies. Real time is something different, not dependent upon these manifestations. Movement or sequence is a feature of the former, and it is debatable whether the latter also contains some 'higher' kind of movement or sequence.[60] This distinction allows for a reading according to which what are described in the passage are two different times, a psychic one and a physical, manifested or sensible time. The movement from one life to another would not be from one stage of the same succession to another, but a movement from a hierarchically higher time to the lower one.[61] Although I am convinced that Plotinus anticipates such a distinction (and I will say more about it below), I find it hard to see that it would be at work in this particular passage. The central opposition in the chapter is one between the life of eternity, 'all at once' and that of time, moving on 'to the "next" and the "after", and what is not the same, but one thing after another' (e.g., III.7.11.1–5; 14–19).[62]

Some scholars take the passage to refer to only one kind of time, and thus take the progressive movement to be intrinsic to time itself, not just to its manifestations. On one view of this kind, Plotinus' account of time is radically idealistic. Time is generated by soul, which is ontologically prior to it. Because the soul, unlike the *nous*, is not capable of thinking true being in its entirety at once, it thinks of it part by part, thus creating a succession of stages of mental activity. And since this succession is also a succession of the metaphysical hypostasis Soul, it does not merely think in this way but also generates the physical universe through the same succession.[63] This view has two immediate merits. First, it approaches the metaphysical hypostases as

[60] Cf. Smith 1998: 341, and his 1996: 211. [61] Manchester 1978.

[62] Moreover, in lines 14–34 Plotinus has already described, metaphorically, the generation of time by the soul. To read the immediately following passage as a recapitulation of this story is to saddle him with unnecessary duplication. It would be more charitable to read him as making another point here, namely describing the generated realm in time, especially since it will be followed (in lines 45–63) again by the opposition of the self-identical and unchanging life of eternity and the continuous and successive life in time.

[63] Cf. Strange 1994: 49, who then concentrates solely on psychological succession.

directly explanatory for psychological phenomena, and second, it explains the curious recurrence of the term *dianoia*, 'discursive thought', in the passage. Its possible problem is circularity: why is it that soul is not capable of thinking all being at once but must think one thought at a time? Because its life and actions are by nature successive and temporal?

In the end, my interpretation steers in between the above-mentioned two main lines of interpretation. I do not take time simply as a result of a certain way of thinking, but rather as a necessary and natural accompaniment of it. For Plotinus, time is not a side effect of succession but something intimately connected with it, each presupposing the other. The significant further distinction between manifested and higher time can be found elsewhere in the *Enneads*, but here it can be set aside: what interests Plotinus is the successive nature of time and its generation of the universe.

But what exactly does Plotinus mean by life? There are reasons to believe that he is talking about more than events. First, Plotinus never seems too preoccupied with events or the distinction between objects and events.[64] What he worries about are the bodily particulars and their nature that is in flux (I.8.4.5–6).[65] Even though he talks about activity (*energeia*) he seems primarily to have the actualisation of *logoi* in mind. Souls are not in time themselves but all their affections and the things they make are (IV.4.15.17–18). And among the things the souls make are forms in matter (IV.4.15.27–39). This, in fact, is their primary production. Second, his comparison of the completeness of eternity and the division and deficiency of the temporal realm would be futile if in the case of eternity and the *life* particular to it (e.g., III.7.3.16) he were concerned with actualisation of formal power, and if in the case of time his sole interest were in events. Third, and to my mind conclusively, he connects time to the generation of the universe that happens in stages. Time comes into existence simultaneously with the universe, following the creation of the universe by the *life* of the Soul (III.7.12.20–5; esp. line 22: *bios*). 'Life of the Soul' must refer to (any) activity of soul which lies in making and becoming/generation (*en poiēsei kai genesei*; III.7.12.6–7). It actualises things one after another and comes into being part by part (*to kata meros esomenon*; III.7.11.53; 56).

Unlike the complete whole of eternity, and unlike the soul that generates it, time is described as divided, as consisting of parts (IV.4.15.4–5). It has an episodic existence.[66] Now it is, of course, possible to divide time into

[64] Actually, we have seen nothing that would refer to the Aristotelian distinction of particulars and events (*Ph.* 206a33–b3; cf. 208a20–1).

[65] Cf. IV.3.8.26; 26.50–5; 7.3.19; V.1.9.5; 6.6.17; VI.3.2.4.

[66] O'Meara 1993: 77 talks of time 'breaking up to successive moments'.

parts of different 'size' depending on the way one conducts the division. Time as manifested to us can be divided into hours and days, for instance. These divisions are imposed by the human mind. In the above quotation, however, the point is not the one made elsewhere, namely that time is measured by us, for example, by the motion of heavenly bodies (III.7.13.1 ff.). These kinds of parts can overlap: for instance, sixty minutes are co-extensive with an hour. Plotinus' comparison between complete eternity and time which is 'one in continuity', and all talk of *successive* parts, seem to suggest, rather, that he here regards time as divisible into non-overlapping parts. If the parts in question were overlapping, the whole they generate would be, in a sense, more than Soul's life, because in it some of its stages would be repeated several times. The parts of time of which the life of the Soul consists need to be mutually exclusive of one another, and put together in succession, they create the whole time.

Note, also, that the Neoplatonic account of time provides a regionalisation for things that happen in time: both events and particulars are localised in time. In this context, a quotation from Damascius is helpful: 'Just as the parts of separate things do not overlap because of space, the occurrence of the Trojan war does not become mixed up with that of the Peloponnesian war because of time.'[67] Similarly, it is impossible for the two discontinuous instances of 'Socrates sitting at this tripod' to get mixed up because they happened at different regions of temporal succession.

Unity, identity and persistence of particulars

That Plotinus does make use of a notion of numerical identity seems to be attested by his discussion, above, on eternity and eternal entities. His special usage is to denote with the term 'numerically one' (*arithmō hen*) things that are 'always' self-identical, that is, changeless intelligibles. The entities of which every possible feature or property is actual eternally are changeless, and changeless things are 'always' the same, in the sense of being self-identical. They have identity in the sense of numerical identity. Eternity and eternal things can also be called true unities. From the point of view of the human mind, forms do have some kind of logical parts, but they have no spatial parts, and as eternally completely actual, they are partless also from the viewpoint of temporal discontinuities or stages of different actualised properties. Entities like this are one: they are determinate,

[67] Simpl. in *Phys.* 775,16.

logically (although not spatio-temporally) separable and countable things which explain the unified natures perceptible in the universe.

The divisible nature and the stages or parts involved in temporal particulars already point to a difference in the identity and unity of temporal things. Particulars have a numerical identity at a time, but they are not self-identical through time, and, moreover, it is unclear whether Plotinus thinks they retain any of their properties throughout their existence. In inquiring into the nature of the heavens, he also makes interesting comments about the nature of bodily particulars and their individual identity (*to tode*; II.1.2.16–17). He does claim that even though they are not eternal, they last for a long time (II.1.3.10–11; cf. 1.29–31). This permanence is due to form (*kat' eidos*), whereas the substratum is in flux[68] (II.1.1.20–5). And by flowing substratum he does not mean just matter, but body (II.1.2.6–7). Permanence is, then, only permanence of form, and the long-lasting permanence of individual objects is permanence in a flux.

What is this peculiar permanence in flux? In comparison to eternity, time has a mere 'image of unity':

> Instead of sameness and being [always] in like manner, and lasting, that which does not last in the same, actualising things one after another; instead of uninterrupted and one, an image of one, *one in continuity* (*to en sunecheia hen*); instead of presently boundless and whole, [tending] towards boundless [but in the sense of tending] towards *perpetual successiveness* (*to ephexēs aei*); *instead of a whole together/at once*,[69] *a whole which will come to be and will always come to be part by part*. (III.7.11.51–7)[70]

In the realm of time, unity and identity are a tricky business. Things change, they come to be part by part, stage after stage. It is body's nature to flow, to change rapidly and in general to be cut into pieces, and it would have no order, nor any persistence, without the soul (IV.7.3.19–36). The unity of the realm of time consists of successive stages during which different *logoi* of forms are actualised. The universe and the things in it have persistence in movement (IV.4.32.52–3).

Especially interesting is Plotinus' use of the notion 'one in continuity' (*to en sunecheia hen*; perhaps recalling Arist. *Met*. 1016a) in the passage. He

[68] The flux Plotinus has in mind seems to include the material changes that the bodies undergo, the fact that there are elements flowing out of them as well as into them.

[69] The Greek term is *athroos*, which can have both the sense of 'together', 'collective', 'complete' etc. and the sense 'all at once'. The latter reading would render eternity as looking like an eternal present.

[70] ἀντὶ δὲ ταὐτότητος καὶ τοῦ ὡσαύτως καὶ μένοντος τὸ μὴ μένον ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, ἄλλο δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ἐνεργοῦν, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀδιαστάτου καὶ ἑνὸς εἴδωλον τοῦ ἑνὸς τὸ ἐν συνεχείᾳ ἕν, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀπείρου ἤδη καὶ ὅλου τὸ εἰς ἄπειρον πρὸς τὸ ἐφεξῆς ἀεί, ἀντὶ δὲ ἀθρόου ὅλου τὸ κατὰ μέρος ἐσόμενον καὶ ἀεὶ ἐσόμενον ὅλον. Note that in here, too, Plotinus uses both συνεχής and ἐφεξῆς for what seems to amount to the same thing. Cf. note 57.

uses the same expression when talking about bodies, and in that context he explains that they are divisible, wholes of parts in which parts are different from each other and occupy different spaces. Every part is also necessarily something less than the whole (IV.1.1.13–17; and esp. lines 60–5). I suggest that 'one in continuity' is a semi-technical term which has the same meaning in different contexts. Analogous to material things that occupy different spatial regions, time has parts which are all different from one another and each is necessarily less than the whole time. These parts are different from one another in two senses: during these, partly the same but also different *logoi* of forms become instantiated, and the instantiation occupies a different region within time. They have their own region in the succession.

I suggest, furthermore, that the 'flowing' identity of bodily composites is due to composites having a unity and identity like that of the whole of time. They consist of numerically different stages of existence which are also qualitatively different, and of which each occupies a different region of time. Strictly speaking, then, the stages do not lose or acquire properties, nor do the things which consist of these stages. To analyse the import of the passage further, let us compare Plotinus' view to a modern four-dimensionalism that holds that in addition to three dimensions in space, particulars have a temporal dimension, that is, they consist of temporal parts. Here, I will use David Lewis' theory of time-slices and connected theories of analytic ontology – no reference is made to the theories of four-dimensionality in modern physics.

To recall Lewis' formulation:[71] Something persists if and only if it exists at various times. Something perdures if and only if it persists by having different temporal parts, or stages, at different times, and each temporal part of it is wholly present at one time. Something endures if and only if it persists by being wholly present at more than one time. According to Lewis, 'identity over time' must be understood loosely: of the things that persist, most things perdure, but they do not endure. A continuant consists of many temporal parts, but these parts share no particular in common. The object is never wholly present and in the case of instantaneous parts, they may not even overlap. A four-dimensional whole lasts over time in virtue of having different temporal parts at different times. The time-slices are strictly identical only with themselves, whereas 'identity' through time is different. It consists of a succession of time-slices that are not identical with each other. The slices do not change, nor does the perduring whole change in the ordinary sense of the term. Change is succession of the slices.

[71] Lewis 1986: 202–5, 210.

What makes me think this view would illuminate Plotinus' thought? First, I hope to have shown that Plotinus' account of time and eternity is designed primarily to analyse the essential differences between the realms of time and eternity. Hence we arrive at a structure which is illustrated in the following table, the two last columns of which are analogical, and both necessary in order to understand the spatio-temporal realm:[72]

	Eternal realm	Spatial extension	Temporal extension
The whole	the Intellect	the body of the universe	the whole time and life of the soul (= all successive actualisations of forms)
Parts	Forms	bodies, particulars (= conglomerations of matter and images of forms)	moments and instances of the life of the soul (= temporal parts, time-slices)

Second, neither episodes nor four-dimensionality are quite unheard of in the context of ancient philosophy. Obviously the latter term needs to be taken with a pinch of salt: it is applied to an era which had no concept of absolute space, and the notions of extension and dimension are therefore not straightforward. Nonetheless, it seems that ancient philosophers did think of bodies as having an extension in the sense of having three dimensions,[73] and that idea opened up a possibility of treating time as yet another dimension. Thus it has been suggested that Plato already thought that time has parts just like a block of wood, and even that for him the objects in time are episodic, like a series of Socrates stages.[74] Something like the modern idea of a space–time worm, a four-dimensional object with temporal parts or time-slices has sometimes been attributed even to Aristotle.[75] I am inclined to think that what has been missing in the accounts both of Plato and of Aristotle is the idea of a four-dimensional object. As Miller has put it, it only makes sense to ask whether today's eye-glasses

[72] Aristotle's definition of time as a number or quantity of movement raises the question of how time differs from other measurements, especially from distance (cf. *Ph.* 220b26–32), and what the especially temporal aspect of motion is as opposed to its quantifiable aspects. Cf. Bostock 1980.

[73] The Stoics had a notion that is often translated as extension: τὸ τριχῇ διαστατόν, εἰς μῆκος, εἰς πλάτος, εἰς βάθος, LS 45E. Plotinus comments on this notion arguing that three-dimensionality cannot come from matter itself (VI.1.26.18 ff.; cf. II.1.6.47). Another term translated either as magnitude or as extension is *megethos*, which Plotinus mostly uses in his descriptions of bodies.

[74] Owen 1966; White 1971. White comes up with a notion of 'qualifiedly identical', that is, identical in some respects but not in others. Cf. *Tht.* 158–9; *Prm.* 146c–d; 152a–e.

[75] The discussion is based especially on *Int.* 20b14–23 and *Met.* 1015b16–19. Cf. *Met.* 1026b. Matthews 1982; White 1971; Miller 1973; Code 1976.

and yesterday's eye-glasses go together to make up one single thing, if one already has a notion of four-dimensionality.[76]

Third, there is a most interesting piece of evidence for something very close to the notion of four-dimensional objects or wholes in Plotinus. As we have already seen, the objects of the sensible realm, bodies, are not stable but in flux. At III.7.4, Plotinus moves on to inquire not just into time itself, but into objects that exist in time:

> In the case of things that have come to be, if you take away the 'will be', as they are things that acquire [being], non-existing immediately begins (lines 18–19). . . . It seems that for the things that have come into being, substantial being (*hē ousia*) is existing from the origin of their coming to be until they have reached the extreme of time in which there is no longer being. This is [their] being and if anyone took it away, their life (*bios*) would be lessened. And similarly [would their] being (*to einai*). (lines 24–8)

There is an ancient idea that for temporal beings, continuation is as close as they get to eternity.[77] Plotinus combines this strand of thought with his ideas of temporal 'extension' of particulars, forming a new ontology of temporal wholes. Both the realm of time *and* objects in that realm have an existence of a very peculiar sort. For them to have being means that they have a beginning and an end in time and extend between the two extremes. This is their life, their being. This continuous unity, I argue, is composed of episodes of their existence through time. Considering them as wholes requires taking into account all the episodes of their life, of their existence. If one considers an entity in time without, for instance, its future, it has only a lessened overall existence. Here, then, we do seem to have some kind of notion of a thing which extends both in space and time. Admittedly, the passage does not mention instants, stages or time-slices, but it does seem to prove that Plotinus treats objects in time more or less analogously to spatially extended things. Analogous to a spatially extended entity composed of parts, the temporal parts, too, are such that in order to have a proper whole you need to have all (or most of) its parts.

For Lewis' view it is important that the time-slices of a four-dimensional object are strictly identical with themselves. There may not be identity through time but every slice is self-identical in the sense which fulfils the so-called Leibniz Law, the indiscernibility of identicals. Do Plotinus' stages

[76] Miller 1973: 487–8.

[77] As David Sedley has pointed out, in the *Symposium*, Diotima explains procreation by a similar move. Since mortal creatures have no real unity but strive for their little share of immortality by succession of states of body and states of the soul, having children can be conceived as a continuation of this succession, and thus a prolongation of the existence of the parents. Sedley 1999: 310.

fulfil this sort of identity? The answer to the question depends on whether the parts are themselves in flux or not. If the parts of time in question are not imposed by the observer, what determines their length and persistence? Are they identifiable and self-identical or not? What is the principle of individuation for moments?

Let me first rule out one possible view. It might be thought that Plotinus was talking of something like Aristotelian nows. A 'now' is the limit of every enduring time, which in itself has no duration. This understanding might be supported by the following evidence. As one of the final questions of treatise III.7, Plotinus takes up the question of quantity of time. Again, his analogy is spatial extension and division. He compares the spatial advancement of a walking man to his motion in time. Observation shows the motion as continuous. If we trace the starting point of such a motion, we come to the limit or extent, to the point and moment where the motion began. This moment that the human mind can grasp as the starting point is probably more extended than the basic moments of the life and movement of the Soul. Ultimately, the experiment will take us to the movement of the soul which is 'divided into equal parts/intervals' (*hētis ta isa dieistēkei*; III.7.13.52–62, esp. l. 62). The experiment relies on an understanding of spatial movement and its limit, and thus could be recalling Aristotle's ideas about time as the number of motion. But if these parts are the same parts Plotinus has been talking about hitherto, it is unlikely that they were nows without temporal extension, without duration. Plotinus' interest has been in real parts, parts that make up time, something it consists of, and it cannot consist of nows without duration. Note also that the basic moments, the text seems to claim, are distinctive in that they are all of the same extension or duration.

If we take the parts to have a duration – no matter how short – the question becomes what determines this duration. Option I is that moments are individuated by time itself. It is just the nature of time to be divided into mutually exclusive parts, and analogous to a line in space, the parts have successive places along the line. Option II is that there are stages at which the life of the soul is not changing. The smallest instant is the moment during which the life of the universe is self-identical.

Option I is supported by the fact that Plotinus is reluctant to make time a feature of the material world. As the life of the soul, its nature should not be ontologically dependent on what happens at a metaphysically lower level, that of matter. The option would have the extra benefit that it fits with all interpretations of flux. Since the moments are basic, their relation to change could be of any of the following three sorts: there could be

(1) moments during which nothing changed, (2) moments when something but not everything in the universe changed, and (3) moments during which something or even everything was already in the process of changing into something else. There are, however, two problems with this view. First, there would be no way for a human being to form any theories about the length of these moments or instances. Their existence and nature would be simply postulated and basic. Second, Plotinus does not, in the end, seem too happy about a wholesale partition of time and change. He suggests a thought experiment. Let us suppose that all actualisations of formal power stop. Would 'before', 'after' or 'future' have any sense in that situation? Would there be anything else apart from eternity (III.7.12.7–22)?[78] Not engaging in actualisations would seem to abolish time. Despite his reluctance to accept the Aristotelian definition of time as the measure of the movement, Plotinus seems to think that time and change have a connection.

Option II is more promising in these respects. It ties time closely with change. If time is divided along with change to stages, moments or instants, the smallest instant is that during which nothing in the whole generated universe changes, and by each new moment the universe is different, that is, not merely by happening at a different time but also by different *logoi* of forms being actualised. On this view, too, there are basic moments but their individuation is determined by change caused and governed by forms. However, this option too meets difficulties. Since Plotinus claims that souls' movements in time are divisible into moments of the same length or extension, he would have to hold that it just so happens that change in the universe occurs in equal steps, and that it is impossible for any change to take place in less time than it takes for one moment to change into another. The relation between change and the length of moments would be primitive.

On the latter option, the smallest moments of the existence of temporal particulars are self-identical, just like Lewis' time-slices. The former option leaves this question open. It is possible that the smallest parts are self-identical, but there is also the possibility that even the smallest slices are in flux, in which case we can hardly treat them as self-identical – or in general as having a clear-cut identity and individuality. I think that this is implausible since Plotinus would seem to explain the flux of the sensible with the generation that happens part by part, and were the parts themselves in flux, the problem would merely be pushed to another, lower level. However, I have not met textual evidence that would settle the matter conclusively,

[78] Compare Arist. *Ph.* 218b21–219a10.

and it is best to leave the question open. Had Plotinus used the notion of numerical identity also in his description of the status of temporal parts, the matter might have been easier to settle.

At this point we must turn to different dilemmas about continuity and change. It is important to note, first, that even option II does not need to imply that Plotinus takes change to be more primary than time, or that change would be the principle of succession. For him, there is a yet further and higher level of Soul's movement which is primary and not divided: it is the life of the Soul considered in its unity, not split up in any way (III.7.13.63–9). Even the moments are located in this principal movement of the Soul, which is not itself located in anything. This, supposedly, is what guarantees the regionalisation of moments, that is, how they are ordered in succession. It also yields temporal continuity, displayed by succession in the lower time. The existence of these two levels of time in Plotinus is sometimes misleading. Is he a proponent of a dynamic or of an epochal and space-like notion of time?

In my view, Plotinus gives ample evidence for both views. In this he need not be confused. As so often, the explanatory metaphysical levels come to the rescue. Atomic and episodic time is a feature of the spatio-temporal realm in which everything is divisible into both spatial and temporal parts. Dynamic time is a feature of time understood from the point of view of the Soul's dynamic life, creation and preservation of the universe. The reason why human beings do not experience life or perceive objects as episodic is that their souls, too, share this dynamic life and are thus capable of seeing not just the change but also the continuity of the temporal universe. From the point of view of the basic constitution of changing particulars, the successive moments and the changes occurring in that succession present a more appropriate explanatory level, and are therefore more interesting for the present inquiry.

In sum, both the lower time and the things existing in time seem to have parts. These are parts without which the whole will not be a whole, and which are not identical with one another, nor with the whole itself, analogously to parts which occupy different spatial regions. As we saw, for entities in time the prospect of future time-slices adds to their overall existence and being. Within a whole like this, there is continuity, but it is explained in a special way. The successive parts may have many properties in common, but here 'in common' means that they all stand in the same relation to the forms of which they are images. It does not mean numerical identity, because each successive instance of a form, each successive form-copy, happens in a different region of time. In a sense, then, Plotinus'

explanation of change abolishes change as the Aristotelians understand it. Persisting particulars are extended processes.

Is Plotinus a four-dimensionalist?

Admittedly, the comparison of Plotinus and modern four-dimensionalism reeks dangerously of anachronism. Let us next examine the motivations of the two theories as well as their blatant differences.

One reason to adopt the kind of theory of persistence and change held by Lewis is this: endurance through change implies that there is something strictly identical both before and after change. Taken together with the idea that identity entails indiscernibility (if $a=b$, then Fa if and only if Fb), this creates a dilemma. For example, if an object loses a property, how can it be identical to something that it used to be, when it no longer has the same properties? Having been F, the same object is now claimed to be $-F$, and so has contrary properties. Unless a better account is given, the properties that an item gains and loses in change do not seem to be real properties of the entity at all.[79] Platonists, Plotinus among them, are concerned with change and the fact that subjects in the sensible can have contradictory properties. The realm of time is merely an image of the intelligible because entities in that realm are not capable of self-identity in the strictest sense of the word. For Plotinus, sensible things are not only deficient images of the eternal forms, but they are in flux, and that flux forces the philosopher to explain what it means for them to remain individuals and to have permanent existence. This explanation he finds in succession. His motivation is both to explain change and to form a view about the different kinds of identities of eternal intelligible things and bodily objects.

Regardless of whether or not Plotinus and the present-day four-dimensionalists are motivated by similar worries, there remains a focal difference in the two theories. It concerns continuity and the factors that unify the stages into four-dimensional wholes. For Lewis, the different phases of a perduring thing are cemented together by causal relations, which, in their turn, are determined by properties. The refinements of the relational view of identity through time are left to the theory of causation. For Plotinus, everything apart from bare, unformed matter is formed according to some intelligible form. The forms as forming principles, in Aristotelian fashion, give the embodied thing both its form along with its structure, and its direction – in the case of living things, life. The properties

[79] Haslanger 1989: 4–5.

that the temporal slices have are largely governed by Soul (and in many cases the individual soul) as well as formal power. The form is present in the composite via the so-called rational forming principles, the *logoi*, which are immanent and may resemble some kind of causation, but which anticipate in some stronger sense what is to come, and have their power from the separate forms. The formations in the sensible and the changes of objects over time are governed by the power of the separate forms.[80] As we have seen, the composites have a particular organisation of properties, a plan for the properties and organisation of the future succession of slices, as well as a 'permanence of form' throughout their lifetime. Participation in separate but substantial and essential form and the thereby acquired completing properties give the quasi-substances unity both at a certain moment and through time. Nonetheless, the bodily objects are always incomplete images of forms because at every stage they display only a certain set of actualised potentialities which the forms have in full actuality.

The importance of the continuity that the formal power gives to four-dimensional wholes may perhaps better be appreciated through another comparison. Muslim Occasionalism, especially in the orthodox version propounded by al-Ash'ari (d. 936) and developed in the Ash'arite school of thought, held that an omnipotent God creates the universe anew at each moment. Either He creates everything anew at each instant – both substances and their accidents – or He connects accidents to bare material atoms (which themselves have no properties), which subsist through subsequent moments. (Time, too, has an atomic structure.) Continuity on this view is due to the creator's continued benevolence: in principle, God could at any given moment create a universe that does not resemble the previous one at all.[81] Plotinus' universe is not governed or maintained by such a personal and voluntary creation. The One overflows by necessity of its nature, and its emanation gets a necessary form through the different levels of reality. Were it possible to stop the emanation and the universe for a moment and put it in movement again, its movement would continue according to the same laws and necessities of the emanation. Plotinus' view shares the atomic view of the generation of the universe, but in the end it resembles more the present four-dimensionalist model. In both cases, there is something in the universe that makes each moment of its existence possess the properties it has. The properties are not given by an external creator

[80] At VI.3.2.20 ff. form is described as 'matter's rest and kind of quietness'; it limits what is otherwise unlimited.

[81] Frank 1999; Kukkonen 2000. I am grateful to Taneli Kukkonen for introducing this fascinating theory to me.

as its voluntary act. Where Plotinus differs from present scholars, however, is in what he takes the universe to be: ultimately the truth of the universe is not its sensible and material appearance, a mere reflection of the level of true being, but the metaphysically more significant hypostases. The causal efficacy Plotinus is interested in is not perceived material causation but the transcendent formal power that ultimately explains this causal efficacy.

Finally, I wish to underline another difference. For Plotinus, as we have seen, matter really does not have its own existence at all, and it is sometimes equated with non-being, whereas time is the life of the Soul, the moving image of eternity. Therefore time and matter are not on the same level of explanation. I hope, however, to have shown that, if we put bodily objects under scrutiny, it is illuminating to compare Plotinus' view to modern four-dimensionalist theories. In so far as ordinary sensible objects have an existence at all, they have extension, i.e. their image-like being is extended in space. But they have also a fourth dimension, in time, and for both of these reasons they are objects that are divisible into parts, and unities in the sense of being continuous wholes of these parts.

Implications for selfhood and self-knowledge

Above, I have argued for four things: first, for a special ontology of Plotinian particulars, based on the Platonic division between being and becoming; second, for the role of time (the life of the soul) in giving the particulars as well as events their proper and individual region in time, thereby helping to identify them; third, for two concepts of 'identity' in Plotinus, one that corresponds to Aristotle's conception of numerical identity and another much more loose or merely metaphorical one; and fourth, for certain similarities that Plotinus' understanding of spatio-temporal individuals shares with modern four-dimensional theories. The interpretation, if correct, has several interesting consequences for other areas of Plotinus' philosophy, and importantly for his understanding of the self and the possibility and structure of self-knowledge, of which I shall now give some preparatory guidelines.

David Lewis mentions that there may be mixed cases which both perdure and endure, like a person consisting of an enduring entelechy ruling a perduring body.[82] Something very much like this is going on in Plotinus' philosophy of the self. The soul, of which at least the highest and the inmost part, the intellect, is timeless or eternal, rules a perduring body.

[82] Lewis 1986: 202.

Furthermore, as a composite of soul and body, the embodied human being, the empirical self, is necessarily an entity in time, an entity which has unity and identity only in continuity.[83] This is Plotinus' way of accounting for the personal sameness and identity that admit degree, that leave room for the change and development of the embodied self. True identity and unity are features of that part of us that is beyond time: the eternal soul or intellect: 'just as in ourselves, when some parts are cut off and others grow instead of them, soul leaves the old ones and comes to the new as long as the one soul remains' (IV.3.8.56–8).

The embodied self is not just a bodily thing or the set of one's psychological properties, but a process in time. This process shows both continuities and discontinuities. Some of our characteristics are long-lived, some shorter-lived or even momentary. According to Richard Sorabji,[84] the idea of a discontinuous self is already explicit in Seneca and Plutarch. Let us quote the Platonist Plutarch:

> Wherefore that which comes to being from it does not come to be completely, for generation never ceases nor stands still, but makes from the seed an everchanging embryo, then a babe, then a child, to be succeeded by a boy, a youth, a man, an elderly man, an old man, destroying the previous generations and times of life by the ones that follow them. But we ridiculously fear one death, even though we have already died so many times and still are dying. . . . Nobody remains or is one, but we become many, while matter is drawn around and sliding into some one appearance and a common impression. (Plut. *Mor. On the E at Delphi* 392c–d)

It is not just that people change, but they die, as it were, several times. The changes they undergo are so great that it is legitimate to think of them as living several lives. The examples of a baby and a youth are experientially or phenomenally strong: few can fully identify with the aspirations and thoughts of their much younger self.

Plotinus' model accommodates both changes as well as continuities in our personal 'identity'. Note that the embodied self is deeply personal. For this self, the contingently and personally constructed past is a real aspect of selfhood. As a part of one's self-process, the past is the necessary horizon against which the self of this moment is seen. Similarly the future developments of the embodied self belong to the whole process of its lifetime, of its selfhood in time.[85] This may be the background for Plotinus' reluctance to accept suicide (I.9). Selfhood of the composite of soul and body is a

[83] R. Sorabji has pointed out that the 'momentariness' of the self is also at issue in *Symp.* 207d–208a and *Tht.* 152d–153d; 181b–183c. Sorabji 1999: 18.
[84] Sorabji 2000: 247–8 (for Seneca, who attributes the theory to Plato, cf. *Ep.* 24.19–21; 58.22–3).
[85] IV.4.16.1–7.

process which has a limited, given lifespan. If any part of that process is cut off from the rest, the whole is destroyed. By killing oneself one deprives oneself of the possibility for further actualisations. This is critical especially since these actualisations could have amounted to moral progress towards happiness and the good.

The inner 'I' is a different sort of entity. It does not merely have a paradigmatic identity, but, as we shall see, it is also paradigmatically happy. Its happiness is eternal and complete, unlike ordinary happiness which is composed of episodes of pleasant feelings. The ideal psychic state is incomposite, whereas our normal state is composite.[86] As eternal and complete, the inner 'I' is beyond the past and future horizons. It does not lack anything, and therefore it does not strive towards self-realisation. It has no history and no future. It is what it is, in a manner of speaking, in one continuous perfect instant. Although this self is, as we shall see especially in chapter 3, primary in the sense that it is that which endows human beings with their capacity to reason and reflect, as well as that according to which life ought to be lived, from the practical point of view it is of secondary interest. As complete and perfect, it is beyond the need of change and self-improvement, whereas the self that we need to concentrate on is the process self, that which is one only in continuity. This is the self that all the efforts at self-control and self-improvement concentrate on, a self which is not a given but constituted by ourselves in time.

Besides outlining the basic features of the double view of self, the discussion of eternal and temporal entities sets the stage for Plotinus' views on self-knowledge, to be discussed in detail in chapter 3.2. Let us here sketch the overall epistemological implications that will direct us towards the interpretation to come.

Much has been discussed about whether or not Plato's motivation for his 'unreal' ontology of the sensible is its epistemologically problematic nature. Are sensible particulars epistemologically or ontologically deficient, or both? And which deficiency is primary for Plato? In the case of Plotinus and his metaphysically heavy system, it is hardly possible to distinguish metaphysical and epistemological deficiency in this way. They are interconnected. Particulars are both ontologically unreal and epistemologically problematic. The objects of true knowledge are the eternally and completely self-same entities of the intelligible, whereas discursive thinking, inasmuch as it involves sensible objects, has to settle with something changing, something of which only a part or some of the parts are available for grasping at

[86] I.4.14.30; I.5.7; Sen 1995: 21.

any one time. If the above interpretation of Plotinus' ontology of particulars has something to it, it seems that particulars are very difficult objects of cognition. The fact that they have no true substantial being but strive for completeness by extending in time makes it hard to grasp them. Even if one's perceptions of the world were correct and reliable, it is impossible for a human mind to fully grasp a temporal object because one is never in possession of all of its changing properties. Some of them are not revealed because they are either past properties forgotten or future properties not yet even actualised.

This creates a further dilemma: from God's (or Intellect's) point of view also four-dimensional objects could, presumably, be fully grasped. What, then, differentiates these objects from proper objects of knowledge, the forms? If human reason could, at any one moment, fully understand the complete actualisation of the forms responsible for the existence and changes of any one object, it would already be engaged in something very much like noetic thought, but its thinking, unlike true knowledge, would remain representational.[87] Ideally, this would involve not just grasping of the properties or all the *logoi*, but of their interrelations and the structure they belong to at any given moment, as well as the succession or unity they form through time. From a Platonist point of view, however, the four-dimensional objects, no matter how fully understood, remain incomplete images of the forms. Their relation to their paradigm is a complicated issue that will be discussed in more detail in section 1.2, but it is governed by what is sometimes called The Principle of Causal Relationships: a cause must always be not only distinct from but also superior to the produced effect of which it is a cause.[88] As such, images of forms are always incomplete in comparison to their exemplars.

This is also the case in relation to the higher and embodied 'I' whose relation is similar to the form's relation to its images.[89] True self-knowledge must be about the eternal – or timeless – inner I, not about the changing and image-like self of the realm of time and matter. And indeed, Plotinus does distinguish two ways in which the rational animal can know itself, as a rational soul in time, *dianoia*, and as the timeless intellect, *nous*. As we

[87] For thought, cf. chapter 3; for the sense in which the term representational is used here, cf. p. 99, n. 13.

[88] For this formulation, Rangos 1999.

[89] In chapter 3.1 I will argue, for instance, that the capacities of discursive reason are temporal images of the functions of the *nous*. In the case of Plato, the analogy between the relation of the intelligible to sensible and the relation of the disembodied and embodied individual is argued by Gerson 2002: e.g., 3.

shall later see, only the latter amounts to real self-*knowledge*.[90] Whether or not this true self is an individual or a person in any meaningful sense is a further problem to be addressed in the chapters to come.

1.2. HUMAN INDIVIDUALS AND INDIVIDUALITY

The question as to what makes human particulars individuals has, in Neoplatonic scholarship, been discussed as an aspect of the question whether Plotinus postulated forms[91] of individuals or the so-called soul-forms.[92] The starting point for the controversy is Plotinus' dilemma whether there is such a thing as *Autosōkratēs*, Socrates-itself (or, as many people maintain, a form of Socrates) and not just a form of a human being, an *autoanthrōpos* (V.7.1.3–7; 9.14.18). At issue is: (1) What individuates human particulars? Is it the material or the formal aspect of the human composite? And since the sources seem to allow a larger, although not exclusive, role for the formal aspect of the composite – matter seems responsible only for deformation and the particularities that a deficient image of formal power expresses[93] – the problem arises: (2) In what manner and on which hypostasis does individuality ultimately reside? The latter question does not primarily seek to explicate the details of the Neoplatonic system and the metaphysical functions of its different hierarchical levels. What is at stake is the significance of individuality and personality. Because the higher hierarchical levels are not just explanatory and causal entities in the coming to be of the universe but also the truth about what it is to be a human being, to have a human soul and to be a self, and as such, they also present the normative end of a good human existence, it is crucial to know what role individuals and individuality have on those levels. How important is individuality for Plotinus' notion of self?

[90] V.3.4; cf. chapter 3.2.

[91] Throughout, I will use the term 'form' in two ways: (1) as a very general term signifying the formal aspect as opposed to the material aspect; but also in a slightly more specific sense (2) for something which can (a) be found within the Intellect, as its object of thought, and (b) can have its image in matter thus creating, defining and forming the entities of the sensible sphere. Before any further qualifications, then, the term can equally well be used of forms as universals and of particulars. I will be using the term 'idea' only when that is Plotinus' explicit choice of terminology.

[92] The topic whether Plotinus postulated forms of individuals was debated in the 1960s and 1970s by, among others, Armstrong 1977, Blumenthal 1966, Mamo 1969 and Rist 1963. The discussion has more recently been renewed by Ferrari 1997, Gerson 1994, Kalligas 1997 and O'Meara 1999. The participants of the second wave of the debate all posit forms of individuals for Plotinus, some more hesitatingly than others. Ferrari 1997 suggests that individuation may happen at the level of Soul rather than Intellect.

[93] E.g., I.8.14.40–51.

In this chapter, I will argue for a special understanding of individuation and individuality. The interpretation will steer between the following two extremes:

(I) On one view, human individuality must by metaphysical necessity reside in the Intellect, and therefore it is appropriate to postulate forms of individuals. This is, among other things, because of the role which the Principle of Plenitude plays in Plotinian metaphysics. [94] According to this principle, every lesser degree of any possibility is necessary after every greater one:

> There must not be souls alone either, without the manifestation produced through them, if it is in every nature to produce what comes after it and to unfold itself as a seed does, from a partless beginning which proceeds to the final stage perceivable by the senses. (IV.8.6.6–10)[95]

Each thing in the universe, apart from the very lowest one, has the causal power to produce something lower than itself. The causal power depends on the place the thing holds in the hierarchy – or, to be more exact, of its distance from the ultimate causal power, the One or the Good. The descending *scalae* of universality descend downward to the point where no further descent is necessary, or indeed even possible. Since the position in the ladder depends on the number of instances that can be caused by it, the lowest step – so the story goes – would consist of a form which has and can have only one instance, that is, a form of an individual. Forms of individuals would be a Platonic version of the idea of a species which has only one member.[96] Presumably such a form of a human being would explain the particularities of one person, and for some reason, only one trace or image of that form would be possible in the sensible world at any one time. Human individuality would reside in the Intellect itself, and thereby individual human beings with all or most of their bodily and psychological characteristics would be among the very basic things in the intelligible universe.

(II) A radically different view arises from an emphasis on the 'fall' or descent (*katabasis*, sometimes also *kathodos*) of the souls. From that perspective, the central question is why and how the souls, which have their origin in the higher realms of existence, came to be separated and acquired individuality. The answer seems to lie, first, in the necessity of the perfection of the universe, and, second, in the souls' will to 'belong to themselves',

[94] This is an application of the principle formulated by Lovejoy 1936.

[95] Cf. II.9.3.7–12; III.3.7.10–24; IV.8.7.17–24. Cf. Bolton 1994: 89–90 who also cites passages from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

[96] Bolton 1994: 90–1.

to exercise their own will and self-determination (e.g., IV.8.1.47–50; 4.10–12; V.1.1.1–9).[97] For this reason, the souls separate themselves from their shared and perfect source and come to reside in bodies. This 'original' fall is not a mythic story of the temporal or spatial origin of souls but an explanation of their ontological origin. A part of human nature does not descend but remains in – that is, has a share of – the intelligible, thus securing that embodied humans have a connection with the eternal and intelligible realm. Individuality is a result of the fall which divides the souls, makes them deficient and imperfect, and brings them into contact with matter. Ultimately, on this view, it is the attachment the souls have to their own particular bodies (individuated and organised by the Soul of the All) that makes them separate individuals, whereas an ascent (*anabasis, anagōgē, anodos*) back to the origin again diminishes the separation and individuality of the souls.[98] On this view, then, individuality is tantamount to imperfection, and its significance as an explanatory feature of selfhood depends upon which level of the hierarchical anthropology one is interested in. It is chiefly appropriate to the discussions about embodied selves.

Both of these views include one crucial factor to be taken into account: that some kind of Principle of Plenitude is operational in Plotinian metaphysics, and that on Plotinus' view, the soul's fall and embodiment increases its individuality and separation from other souls. On my reading Plotinus is not, however, committed to the ideas that the descending *scalae* of creation are solely and primarily a descending order of universality or that every embodied individual constitutes the lowest species, nor does he wish to leave individuation entirely as a function of the material aspect of the composite. He maintains that individuality and the principle of individuation do belong to the intelligible realm – even the non-descended intellect seems according to some sources to be an individual – and that a different kind of plenitude of the sensible realm is reached by the descending system of creation. We shall see later and in more detail (in chapters 3 and 4) the reasons why Plotinus will insist on individual rational subjectivity, whereas here I shall concentrate on the metaphysical evidence and its interpretative problems.

Plotinus' metaphysics contains a hierarchy of forms and *logoi*. The sensible is explained not just with the help of hypostases, forms and their instantiations in matter, but with a complex system of forms and rational forming principles, *logoi*. As is well known, Plotinus is selective in his use

[97] Cf. chapter 4.1.

[98] A view that comes close to arguing that individuality, too, should be explained mainly in terms of these two directions of souls is presented, for example, by Cary 2000: 120. That the existence of the body is a requisite for the souls to descend is attested at IV.3.9.20–2.

of Plato. With respect to the issue at hand, he uses material especially from the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus* where Platonic forms are going through a crisis and revision after which, it seems, they themselves can be, in a way, complex. This complexity, as we shall see, is explicitly stated by Plotinus. It will lead me to argue that embodied individual persons can be conceived of as determined collections of *logoi*.[99] The structural order of these collections secures that human beings are also individuals in the sense of being determinate entities with coherent internal structures.

If by the term 'form' one designates, for instance, an independent, separate and simple particular Socrates which would have the same status as, say, the form of horse, the propounded interpretation will deny that there are such forms of individual human beings. Plotinus is sensitive to the general–particular distinction, and connects the hypostasis Intellect – the realm of Platonic forms – first and foremost to that which is general. If, however, one signifies by the same term merely a certain possible, ordered collection of formative principles determined by the Intellect and actualised in the lower stages of emanation, the denial of forms of individuals becomes unnecessary. This is because the view presented does not imply that the principle of individuation in Plotinus is just matter, or that each human being shares simply the same form (that of human being). It is quite clear from the texts that the individual nature of human beings is at least indirectly due to the form(s). According to the view presented in this chapter, an embodied person instantiates one possible set of properties of the form of human being. This instantiation is governed by a complex collection of differentiations, forming principles in actuality.[100]

The novelty of this approach for the issue about forms of individuals is to acknowledge that there are two different and to some extent separate (though connected) discussions in Plotinus, which the commentators have sometimes confounded. For on the one hand Plotinus discusses the principle of individuation, and uses examples which suggest that he is mainly occupied by the *different shapes of people's bodies* (and perhaps other characteristics and dispositions belonging to the embodiment). On the other hand, Plotinus is attempting to lay claim for *individual souls* in the intelligible realm and to the possibility of ascent for the rational soul.[101] To

[99] Ultimately, I do not believe that there is enough evidence to *settle* the issue in any conclusive sense. My view, like all the others, is bound to be a reconstruction.

[100] The idea is not completely new but the suggestion is not developed in any great length by anyone. Cf. Armstrong 1977: 53–5. In this, Armstrong follows Igal 1973 (which I have not been able to consult).

[101] Esp. Paul Kalligas' powerful exposition (1997).

match such a view, it might seem more suitable to consider immortal souls as individual and independent forms. What Plotinus says about *logoi* and the individuality of embodied human beings has often been misunderstood or neglected because the topic has been deemed of minor importance in comparison to the descent and ascent of souls. Therefore it may be a good idea to treat, provisionally, the two issues separately.[102]

As far as bodily individual differences are concerned, I argue, there is no doubt that Plotinus uses *logos* as the main explanatory concept. The main challenge to my project lies in the idea of human souls or intellects as eternal, divine beings and residents of the intelligible in their own right. As rational and active thinkers similar to the Intellect itself, our inner core has an existence different from and superior to the existence of our individual shapes, character dispositions and personality. Plotinus wants to claim that souls exist not just in unity but as many, in discarnate modes of being; and he wishes to maintain, further, that perfect thinkers preserve some peculiar individual existence even though they are also one.[103]

I will first tackle the issue of bodily differentiae and the causal system responsible for it, and then propose a way in which that picture could be accommodated to the idea of individual selfhood of soul and intellect.

Compound forms

In order to see what is involved in the discussion of forms of individuals, we must, first, outline Plotinus' understanding of forms. Special attention will be paid to the way in which a fixed set of forms causes the huge variety of shapes, characteristics and entities in the universe.

Plotinus makes generous use of the terms idea (*idea*), form (*eidos*) and shape (*morphē*). Although his use of 'idea' is often due to the fact that he is quoting Plato, it is by no means clear that it would always signify, for instance, something which is one over many.[104] Nor is there a strict

[102] Stephen K. Strange's approach in his paper on 'Who am I?: Form, Intelligence, Soul and Person in Plotinus' (International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, New Orleans, 2003) seemed similar, in this respect, to the one I have adopted.

[103] E.g., IV.3.5.1–15 (to be discussed below); V.7.1.1–3; VI.4.4.34–42; 14.16–31. Cf. Kalligas 1997; Mamo 1969; O'Daly 1973: esp. 52–81; and Sorabji (forthcoming). Some scholars think that there may be only one intellect but many souls.

[104] For contexts in which Plotinus quotes Plato, see; II.9.6.14–19; III.9.1.1–23; V.1.8.7; 8.8.10; VI.2.22.1–5. For a context in which he seems to think that forms are not only individuals, but that they are also of individuals: V.7.1.1 (I will come back to these issues and passages below). Thesleff 1999: 53–73 favours something like the distinction forms=kinds, or types, ideas=value forms in the case of Plato. This chapter recognises the distinction and deals with the first of the two, whereas the terminology of Plotinus does not straightforwardly support the distinction.

difference between *idea* and *eidos*, but the terms are sometimes used as equivalents.[105] *Eidos* can also refer to forms, species, kinds, sorts and even configurations of the sensible realm, *morphē* to configurations and shapes of many kinds. The latter is often used especially of sensible shapes, but intelligible forms, too, have *morphē*.[106] In their case, *morphē* seems to denote the individualising thing, that which differentiates the forms A and B from each other, for instance.[107]

As a good Platonist, Plotinus argues against the Stoics that that which truly exists cannot be body, or anything subject to change, but must be eternal and indestructible, that is, the forms. Form, not matter, is substance. As eternal and determinate entities, forms have also the stability and intelligibility needed for true objects of knowledge. For there to be eternal truths, there must be eternal forms. By its act of thinking the forms, the Intellect both sustains the existence of what we see in the world, and makes it intelligible. It gives it a knowable content.[108]

The universe is held fast by forms. They are, as it were, piled up on matter starting from the forms of elements (V.8.7.17–23). Matter has relevance in as much as it divides entities in the sensible sphere spatially and materially, and since the forms cannot wholly master it, it is responsible for imperfections and thereby also particular expressions of formal power.[109] The intelligible is *sui generis*. It is not local or spatial, and therefore Plotinus thinks that Parmenides' sail-argument is unfair. Following one reading of the day-analogy in the *Parmenides*, Plotinus holds that the intelligible is incorporeal (Plat. *Prm.* 130e–131e; Plot. *Enn.* VI.4.7–8). Nothing in the intelligible is a spatially divisible entity because intelligibles are themselves the principles which hold unities together and govern their 'mode of being' and, in the case of living things, their development.[110]

That the forms themselves, regardless of their role in the coming to be and existence of the things in the sensible realm, remain separate and unaffected in the intelligible is beyond any doubt.[111] The sensible things are, as it were, the Soul's unfolded interpretations of separate forms, that is,

[105] I.6.9.34–6; III.9.1.1–4.
[106] For the references, see Sleeman and Pollett 1980: 290–9; 671–3; cf. Stern-Gillet 2000: esp. at 51.
[107] II.4.4.
[108] V.9.5.13–49; for the Intellect's activity and its relation to substance: V.1.7.28–30; 8.4.44–56; 5.15–25; VI.2.8.1–24.
[109] V.7.2.15–17. Plotinus has also a doctrine of 'intelligible matter'. Intelligible matter is some kind of substrate capable of 'receiving' the forms as they are in the intelligible. This matter is more perfect than lower matter, yet does not seem to play a significant role in the individuation and organisation of the forms (II.4.4–5, esp. 4.1–11). Corrigan 1996a: chapter 6 discusses intelligible matter in detail.
[110] VI.4.8 (like the soul in Arist. *De an.* 411b7–9).
[111] I.8.8.13–16; II.7.3; VI.5.6.13–15; VI.5.8.12–15, 20–2.

deficient images of the intelligibles.[112] It has also been argued, to my mind convincingly, that Plotinus believes Aristotle to be wrong in claiming that separation endangers the universality of the forms, rendering them particulars.[113] Since the forms are something beyond the part/whole distinction of the corporeal realm, that is, intelligible paradigms and laws of being with an existence altogether different from the spatio-temporal entities, their separate existence (which includes being one somehow) does not make them particulars in the same sense that chairs or instantiated properties are particulars.[114]

What are there forms of? The intelligible embraces in one way or another things that resemble universals in the sense of explaining recurrent features in the world, like human being itself. Rather than real universals, these are Platonic forms which are not univocally predicable of their instances, since their instances are always defective images of the paradigm itself.[115] More often than not the examples given are species rather than, say, beauty, likeness or others of Plato's favourite examples. The intelligible includes, further, the principles for elements, and the *prōta genē*,[116] but somehow also standards for particulars like Socrates-himself, or gods, as well as the more general living being. All these cannot be labelled simply as different forms – in the case of some examples one can question whether they are forms in any meaningful sense at all – but seem to present different *kinds* of things. For instance, at least two of the first kinds, sameness and difference, behave in ways different from the 'ordinary' forms. They are intelligible categories which define and differentiate Intellect's contents so as to produce the other forms from One's emanation.[117] As to what there probably are no forms of: beautiful and true are features that all forms share, but ultimately their origin can be traced back to the One itself. Nor are there, from the other extreme, forms of things which are contrary to nature, or of evil, since their origin is in matter.[118] So far, however, neither limitations of terminology nor Occam's razor hinder Plotinus from calling souls forms, nor from thinking that as such they could be among the various entities in the intelligible realm.

Not only is there a variety of forms in the intelligible realm. Plotinus also explicitly says that each form is a compound of parts (VI.9.2.30–1). This

[112] For the sensible realm as an image, *eikōn* and *homōnumos*, e.g., III.7.11.19–30; VI.3.1.19–21; 8.32–7; cf. Gerson 1994: 105.

[113] D'Ancona Costa 1996: 359–60. Whether this is a good argument on Plotinus' part, is another matter, and cannot be dealt with here. E.g. Arist. *Met.* 1086b14–1087a25.

[114] VI.5.8.15–39. [115] Apart from the possible exception of self-predication.

[116] These will be discussed in chapter 3.1. [117] Cf. esp. VI.2.8 and chapter 3.1 of this book.

[118] V.5.3.1–8; V.9.10.1–10; VI.7.31–3. Cf. Stern-Gillet 2000.

non-spatial complexity can mean at least two things. Either (1) Plotinus is thinking about the *Sophist* and the 'interweaving' of the forms, to which our power of *logos* is also due (*Soph.* 259e). As L. P. Gerson[119] has pointed out, it seems that '5 is odd' and '4 is even' represent distinct eternal truths which, in turn, rely on the necessary connections among distinct Platonic forms. Plotinus could, further, believe in what has sometimes been called 'natural inherence', that is, that relations are real properties of their possessors.[120] On this view, he would then think that any relation a form can have pluralises it, makes it a collection of properties. Or (2) he thinks that forms are many in a way in which the living being in the *Timaeus* (30c–31a) has been considered to be many, that is, comprising kinds and species of living beings. Or he might believe both (3).

According to one interpretation, the uniformity and incompositionality of forms is given up by Plato in the *Timaeus* although they are still immutable and eternal.[121] Forms may contain or include other forms. The form of living being, for instance, includes all the forms of living beings (cf., e.g., *Ti.* 30c–d) as its parts. These parts and wholes are not extended, nor material. Intelligible wholes consist of parts in the sense of not being elemental simples that no intellection could penetrate, but, instead, in the sense of including qualitatively different aspects that can be conceptualised as different, and that are needed to explain the kind of distinct eternal truths mentioned above as well as recurrent differences or properties of the sensible realm. The intelligible universe consists of intelligible parts like different forms, and is, further, the complete and most beautiful whole (30d). It contains its parts in such a way as to unify them into a beautiful whole.[122] Living things are said to be parts of the living being 'individually and by kinds' (30c; *kath' hen kai kata genē*), which suggests that the completeness and beauty of the living being rely on internal organisation and structure.[123] A certain kind of composition, namely an internal ordering of the parts, holds the parts together so as to make them one intelligible whole.[124] An intelligible whole is a combination of certain kinds of parts in

[119] Gerson 1994: 66. [120] This is a view attributed to Plato by McCabe 1994.

[121] Problems concerning incompositionality have emerged earlier, in the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*. For the issue of 'austere' individuals, cf. McCabe 1994: esp. part two.

[122] McCabe 1994: 163–4.

[123] Structure means, here, whatever distinguishes wholes with the same parts. I assume, hence, already a denial of one axiom of mereology, that of uniqueness of composition. Cf. Harte 1994: 2, 25. For how Plato rejects mereology, and how he treats compositionality in general, Harte 1994: chapters 1–4; Harte 2002 *passim*. Dillon 1988 suggests that, in the *Timaeus*, there is a mathematical matrix of formulae which is projected onto the Receptacle and will primarily produce the basic triangles, secondarily the physical objects.

[124] The cosmos' being one is also due to its being internally organised and exhausting all the material there is. McCabe 1994: 165.

a particular order. To use Verity Harte's expression, intelligible wholes are *contentful structures*.[125]

Although the usual interpretation of the *Timaeus* passage is that 'individually' here must mean species, whereas 'by kinds' refers to even larger groups, it is easy to see that it could also be read so as to signify species and individuals, in hierarchical order within the living being.[126] For a person with an inclination towards a synchronising view of Plato, at least, this idea is easily connected to the famous passage of the *Sophist* (253b–e), where the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus discuss the greatest of sciences, dialectic, which will give a clear grasp not only of one form extending through many individuals, but also of 'many forms differing from one another but included in one greater form'. A more comprehensive form, it seems, could contain more specific forms, provided that these would all go under the same one heading (in ways that are not clarified in the passage), and the dialectician's true skill would be in revealing the principles according to which the intelligible parts combine, that is, in examining combining relations.[127] The living being of the *Timaeus* could contain, say, the form of horse and the form of hawk, and these in turn would contain the subformations of individual horses and hawks – perhaps through one more step, different races or species of horses and hawks, according to intelligible principles. We would thus have an Aristotelian kind of structure and hierarchy of species and genera.

Plotinus sometimes equates the living being, or the complete living being, with the Intellect.[128] As an organisational principle of being, the Intellect is a perfect collection of things that generate living things in the sensible realm. It is not just the contemplative reasoning activity, but also everything in nature, since everything which follows any intelligible pattern is in some weak sense ensouled, governed by the Intellect through Soul. The intelligible parts in question are of the following kind: Intellect comprises principles for species, like horses and humans, as well as for the formations of sky, earth, sea, plants etc.[129] Furthermore, for the living being to

[125] Harte 2002 argues that a twofold analysis is needed, both of the structure and of the particular kind of parts found in those kinds of structures (and *vice versa*). These are interconnected but both bring their own aspect into the understanding of the whole (e.g., 178, 204–5, 268).

[126] For the *Timaeus* and forms, see Ostenfeld 1997; Taylor 1928: esp. 80–3.

[127] For the *Timaeus*, cf. McCabe 1994: esp. 222–3. Harte 2002 argues that *Timaeus, Sophist* and *Philebus* discuss compositionality not primarily in terms of wholes and parts but in terms of different combining relations like mixing, combining and fitting together. For these same relations in Plotinus, cf. chapter 3.1.

[128] V.9.9.4–9; VI.7.8, esp. 30–2.

[129] II.3.12.4–11; VI.7.12. Dillon 1988 points out also what I will suggest, namely that the form of human being, too, must somehow include all the probabilities of actualisation in individual human beings.

be perfect and self-sufficient, it must include things like claws, horns, eyes and fingers, too (VI.7.10). Note that individuals are not mentioned in this context, merely parts like these. The composition of the whole Intellect or living being which contains the principles for such different entities is explained with the help of *logos*, or *logoi*, a term worthy of pausing over.

In Stoicism, *logos* refers not just to language, reason or speech but it signifies also the power governing the entire universe, the divine pneuma which acts upon matter. This *logos* contains individual spermatic *logoi* (called sometimes seminal principles, *logoi spermatikoi*) that actually produce what there is in the universe. *Logoi* are some kind of inescapable laws of nature that direct everything according to divine destiny.[130] The Stoics thought that these principles inhabited matter and were themselves bodily. Plotinus adopts the notion but rejects the idea that everything that exists is material. He also objects to the Stoic view by claiming that (rational) forming principles (as I will translate *logoi* in Plotinus) include something prior to the principles found, for example, in seeds themselves. He uses the notion to bridge the ontological gap between the intelligible and the sensible, and thus to an extent to solve the problems of separation of the forms from the sensible realm. The power of *logoi* comes from and relies on the power of higher principles.[131] *Logoi* are always expressions of the higher hypostases, referring to a relation between two levels of the hierarchy. They can be divided into three main classes, according to which hypostasis they belong to. It has been suggested that *logoi* can be conceived as (a) in the Intellect, as its forms; (b) in the soul, as further unfolded forming principles; and (c) in the sensible, as forms – or, rather, their images – realised in matter.[132]

Let me spell out their role in more detail, with some of the problems involved:

1. There is one *logos* which includes all the others within it. Plotinus rarely calls the Intellect itself this *logos*, but Soul is more often described as a *logos*, an expression and an interpreter of *Nous* in the sensible world.[133] This already leads to the problem of the status of the *logoi* in the metaphysical hierarchy:
2. Intelligible or sensible? In the plural, the *logoi* are often that through which the *Nous* produces and maintains the sensible, space-extended universe, with the mediating help of the Soul.[134] In Plato, forms are

[130] *SVF* II 780; 1027; 1074; 1132, or LS 44B–E; 46G; 55E. For the Stoic term and its influence on Neoplatonism, see Witt 1931.

[131] IV.4.39.6–18. [132] Atkinson 1983: 50–4; Rangos 1999.

[133] For the Intellect 'like' (*hoion*) a *logos*, VI.2.21.28–30; for the soul, II.9.1.29–33; III.8.2.27–34; IV.3.11.17–22; V.1.3.7–9.

[134] II.3.12.4–6; 9.1.29–33; III.2.2.15–19; V.9.3.30–7; 4.17–19; 6.12–24; Atkinson 1983: 51–2.

causes in the sense that as explanations, they do not merely explain something's being *F*, but they are the reasons for the existence of what is explained.[135] Conceived as such causes, Plotinian *logoi* do overlap with Platonic forms. They both sustain the universe and make it intelligible. However, the term emphasises the creative aspect of forms. *Logoi* act upon matter, being the generative causes within nature.[136] At one point Plotinus claims that although *logos* can and should be contemplated as a form – since it is a form (*eidos*) – it is nonetheless itself inseparable (*achōristos*) from matter, unlike the form itself. The form is something in the intelligible realm, but *qua logos* it not only defines the nature of a thing but makes it also.[137] Yet, as Plotinus' criticism of the Stoics indicated, it would be a mistake to treat *logoi* as a feature proper just of the material realm. *Logoi* belong to the intelligible sphere, whereas the produced, sensible world *participates* in the intelligible forming principles. The universe is somewhere between the intelligible principles and matter, whereas the most common usage of *logoi* is the determined outpouring from the Intellect, that part of its activity which is directed outside. Unlike matter, these are what *exists* in the proper sense of the word.[138]

3. Bundle of properties and its direction. A person, for example, is not merely matter and a bundle of properties or *logoi* which mould and govern the shape of a human being. The indwelling *logos* gives creatures direction, the Aristotelian 'why' something is as it is. The order of the universe is brought about by the direction of *logoi*, which are like laws governing it both at any given moment and towards the future.[139]
4. Entities and parts. The term '*logos*' seems to be used both of whole entities of the sensible realm and of their parts. Plotinus' analogy is a seed for a human being which comprises the principles for different bodily parts (V.9.6.11–20). The principles for eyes and hands belong *as parts* to the *logos* of human being, but both of them can be called *logoi*. As we shall later see, even principles of smaller details of sensible species can be designated by the same term, as are the principles for basic stuffs.[140] The descending order of creation does not involve merely species–genera

[135] For forms in Plato, see Fine 1999, vol.1: 1–35; McCabe 1994: 53–94.
[136] IV.3.11.8–14; VI.7.11.10–17. For the *logos*/*logoi*, see also Witt 1931; Atkinson 1983: 50–4; Fleet 1995: 84–5; Corrigan 1996b: 110–13.
[137] II.7.3.7–10; III.2.2.31–3; VI.3.3.16.
[138] II.4.16.2–3. For internal and external activities, see Emilsson 1999.
[139] II.7.3.6–15; IV.4.39.6–23; Arist. *De an.* 413a13–16.
[140] Plotinus follows *Prm.* 130c–d, where Socrates denies the forms of dirt or mud and other 'undignified' things (V.9.14). Yet as we have learned, even though there are no forms of such things, pure things like earth or water are governed by *logoi*, that is, their structure is originated in the Intellect itself. That the elements are in a sense 'ensouled' may be a reading of Plato, *Epin.* 981b–c; 984b–c.

distinctions and a descending order of universality. The plenitude comes about also by a multiplication of details in the world. The lower the level of the sensible realm one investigates, the more parts and details there are. Fingers, for instance, belong to a lower level of the hierarchy because of their status as parts and details of human beings.

5. Qualities. Many of the things that in modern metaphysics are given as standard examples of universals are explained with the help of *logoi*. Qualities, for example, regardless of whether they are substantial or accidental, are due to *logoi*. Forms are not qualities, but the formative principles of the forms cause the qualities we perceive instantiated in matter. No particular quality is to be found in the Intellect, but as repeatable features all possible qualities are the result of its external activity.[141]

From these building-blocks, already, a hierarchy starts to emerge in which every entity apart from the One is composed of non-spatial parts. The intelligible realm is divided by and into certain determinations which produce and explain almost all differences in the sensible realm. The main divisions within the Intellect are in turn divided into smaller, that is, further unfolded, discriminations. Some of these, at least the forms, can be said to be entities in the Intellect, others are their non-spatial parts. I will proceed to argue that Intellect's true contents are more unitary and more independent than for example the *logos* of nose which has its place in the intelligible only as a part of a living thing/species-form which includes a nose. Intelligible parts form a hierarchy in which some are themselves contentful wholes while others are parts that figure in these wholes.

As a complex form, the form of human being must be composed of parts. These may be relational properties or parts in a more everyday sense, something from which the form is composed. In one context where Plotinus claims that forms have parts (*merē*), his example is 'human being', which is said to be both 'human being', 'living being', 'rational', and 'one', the latter tying together the former properties (VI.9.2.17–22). The discussion Plotinus may be participating in here is one started by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 8.6, where he poses the question of what makes an aggregation of the elements of some one substance one, and not just a heap. In the same context, Aristotle seems to criticise Platonists for this particular problem. Sensible substances partake in several forms and it is unclear what makes this collection of properties a whole.[142] It looks as if Plotinus thought that the same problem may concern not just sensible images of forms but any individual form, as well as the intelligible realm as a whole. If the form of

[141] II.6.1.13–23; 41–9 (cf. II.6.2);VI.2.21.17–32, 44–5. [142] *Met.* 1045a ff. Cf. Scaltsas 1994.

human being is both rational and a living being, it is something multiple and therefore not one. His solution is that 'human being' has parts, but the form also partakes in oneness. This unity seems to be equivalent to goodness and is derived from the One itself, that is, it is not one of the forms. Either way, 'human being' is not the same as 'one' – the former consists of parts, the latter is partless. Unity and goodness are something that belong to all intelligible entities.

'Human being', then, has 'living being' and 'rationality' as its parts. In the first case, 'human being' has a part which the forms of other living beings also have. Other animals, for example, are living beings. Whether this means that there is a form of living being in which the form of human being participates, thus gaining a relational part 'living being', or that there is an overarching form of living being which includes the form of human being as its part is not clear from the text. In both cases form has parts. Similarly rationality is a part of the form of human being, although it is not a part of animal forms. Whether Plotinus would posit a form of rationality also remains unclear. Another type of example of parts includes the eye and the finger. Again, the form of human being is one even though it is composed of parts like these.[143]

Where rationality, life, and eyes are substantial parts of 'human being', parts which all sensible human beings imitate, some of the 'parts' of the form of human being are not present in all embodied human beings. These, Plotinus says, are not essential for the substance to be complete but are mere accidental attributes. Yet these too, like whiteness in swans, are determined by the intelligible realm (II.6.1.13–23; 41–49). Both the completing and the accidental attributes are held together because they belong to the form of human being as its parts, which, in turn, is unified by partaking in oneness.

Forms, it seems, consist of something like logical parts. The above discriminations are perceptible and truly discriminated only by the form being instantiated in matter, but they exist in some sense in the intelligible realm as well. The parts have all their own strictly definable functions or 'intellectual place' in the intelligible so that they form an orderly whole.[144] This suggests a hierarchical *and* inclusive ordering for entities like human beings and eyes or bulls and horns. As *logoi* were above described as divisions within forms, themselves capable of being further divided in the sensible realm, it seems natural to think that the form of living being contains the form of human being which contains the *logos* for noses, and that in turn will

[143] VI.7.10.12–14. [144] Cf. chapter 3.1.

contain the forming principles of aquiline and snub noses. And a similar relationship holds for bulls and their horns.

This does not, however, commit Plotinus to the view that every *logos* has one and just one place in this branched hierarchy. As it happens, both fish and mammals have eyes, so the *logos* of eyes must be included in both. Plotinus' endorsement of 'interparticipation' by forms frees him from thinking that the primarily vertical hierarchy of forms and *logoi* within the form of living being is a complete intelligible explanation of living beings, that *every* thing has a place and *one place only* in it. *Logoi* can be viewed also horizontally, recurring as *logoi* of different forms. Thus there need not be a form of eyed creatures that both herrings and bulls participate in. Both forms include or issue the *logos* of eyes.

Understood in this way, the form of living being in a sense includes anything that is alive, anything governed by the forming principles (with the Plotinian peculiarity of thinking that stones are 'alive' as well, in as much as they have an intelligible arrangement in them). Even though human being and horse, for example, may be within the form of living being – as its parts or possibilities of variation – they can be called forms in so far as: (a) they are shared or participated in by many particulars, that is, they explain the universal features of human beings and horses; and (b) they are themselves wholes, including parts as well as the principles by which their own internal parts or possibilities are unified into some one thing. The forms – supported by the participation relation to oneness – contain the principles for generic attributes and the structure they are organised into, as well as more specific 'data' which make differentiations between kinds and individuals possible.

Knowing forms and logoi

In order to explicate the way in which a form unifies its parts, let us now make a short epistemological digression. The idea of forms themselves as composed of sub-forms or forming principles that belong to their extension (or genus) has repercussions for Plotinus' view of intelligibility. Or perhaps it is *vice versa*, that his view of what it is for something to be graspable by reason has repercussions for how he views forms. I mean this: knowledge is expressed by *logos*, and *logos*, in turn, is something multiple (or, perhaps, *of* something multiple). Plotinus insists that in the act of thinking, mind has to depart from strict unity and engage in what is numerous and multiple.[145]

[145] V.3.10.27–32; VI.9.4.3–7.

This holds for the Intellect as a whole but it may also hold for individual forms. That the Intellect is a multiplicity of different forms establishes that paradigmatic noetic thought is thought, that the objects of its activity are penetrable by reason, and intelligible unlike the One.[146] But for the forms to be understandable for less than perfect thinkers, they, too, must be divisible into parts.

I suggest that Plotinus is applying the account of Socrates' dream in the *Theaetetus* (201d8 ff.) to thinking and knowing. In the dream, an element can only be named 'itself by itself', nothing can be predicated of it, whereas what is a compound is knowable and utterable.[147] Elements are simples. Socrates shows the theory to be problematic, and the discussion ends again in aporia. It is possible that the participants have relied on a faulty premiss, according to one interpretation: namely, that of mereology, the idea that a whole is identical to the aggregate of its parts. The purport of the discussion would be to highlight this error, and together with other dialogues to draw attention to other possibilities, perhaps compositionality and structure.[148] Be that as it may, Plotinus' adoption is, again, selective. What he is interested in are elementary simples (the nature of the One) and the general idea of compositionality and complexity as a requirement for intelligibility and truth (Intellect and its contents).

There seem to be two main rival readings of *logos* in the context of the dream. Either it denotes a sentence, a kind of statement,[149] or an explanation, that is, an account.[150] In the former reading, the unavailability of the elements of *logos* is due to the fact that there can be no sentences which are true of the elements, in the latter it is because they are unanalysable. Plotinus bases his account on the textual evidence of the *Theaetetus* that might support the sentence-reading: at 202a–b it is suggested that 'the only thing that is possible for [an element] is for it to be named, because a name is the only thing it has', and that elements are perceivable whereas compounds are 'knowable and expressible (*gnōstas te kai rētas*) and believable with true belief'. Plotinus for his part says that what is absolutely simple cannot say what it is, or even *that* it is. It cannot say anything else about itself other than the simple 'I'. In order for there to be thought of any more complexity, for things to be 'expressible' (that is, not *arrētos*; V.3.10.43), the thought must be multiple and complex.

Strictly speaking, however, Plotinus has formed quite understandable sentences about the partless one, the 'I' who attempts to speak about

[146] This is the topic of chapter 3.1. [147] For the dream, cf. McCabe 1994: 158–60.
[148] Harte 1994: 12–23. [149] Ryle 1939: 136 ff.
[150] Fine 1979: 366–97. For a thorough analysis, cf. Burnyeat 1990: 134–87.

itself.[151] The problem, as he shows, is not that such propositions cannot be formed at all, but that they are either false or do not yield any additional information about the one, on top of repeating its 'name', i.e., the 'I'. The idea can be generalised: anything that has no distinguishable parts cannot be understood, cannot be penetrated by intellection. This is why the Intellect is a complex collection of forms, and the One beyond even noetic thought and knowledge.

Plotinus, very likely, further thinks that in order to be intelligible forms themselves must be in a qualified sense complex. Forms do not consist of parts in the same way as material entities do, but they may consist of intelligible parts, at least from the perspective of human cognition. This is the purport of the late Platonic dialogue *Sophist*. Although the multiplicity may be a problem for the individuation of forms as well as for their basic and essential nature assumed elsewhere in the dialogues, postulating them as austere simples is equally problematic. That which is so simple and austere as not to have any kind of parts nor participate in any other form, cannot be described in any meaningful way. It cannot enter into dialectic.[152] In Plotinus the fact that forms are intelligible, explanatory entities of the universe means that they explain the world in all its complexity. The core of philosophy and the quest for knowledge is an inquiry into the categories, classes and sub-categories into which the realm of being is organised. Similarly, to learn to know especially a kind- or species-form, one has to learn its parts. One has to understand both its salient relations to other forms and the *logoi* it contains. In the case of a human being this would involve knowing those *logoi* that govern its completing properties, e.g., that it is two-footed.

From the point of view of the Intellect, the forms are the basic elements of the intelligible and thus, in a sense, 'simples'. But their austerity cannot be such that it prevents them from being participants in complex interrelations, or from human reason approaching them dialectically yet correctly. A perfect noetic knower does not make any of the above complex propositional judgements towards knowledge but he, too, 'sees' the forms with at least some of their complexity and interparticipation, or, to put it differently, intuits whatever makes those judgements true.[153]

[151] V.3.10.35–8. He may be thinking especially of the One, but the account can be generalised to hold of any absolutely simple entity.

[152] *Soph*. 244–5; 251e–253. Cf. McCabe 1994: chapter 7; Harte 1994: 122–3. For forms and complexity of eternal truth in Plotinus, cf. Gerson 1994: chapters III and IV.

[153] I.3.4.9–24. Cf. Emilsson forthcoming a; Gerson 1994: 50–1.

The issues of thinking and perfect intellection are revisited in chapter 3. Let us now conclude the epistemological digression. The above account still leaves unclear the cognitive status of the most basic elements – in Plotinus the smallest and most divided *logoi*. How could any proper knowing be based on elements that are themselves unknowable? The whole theory of knowing something as knowing the elements of which that something consists will stand or fall with the account given of knowing the elements themselves. Plotinus faces a version of the same worry. Either the basic elements are ungraspable, or the division into smaller and smaller distinctions, *logoi*, goes on infinitely. Both options are undesirable, the first doubly so. Because *logoi* are explicitly not just elements of language, for example, but principles of existing intelligible entities, Plotinus would not only be committed to the idea that intellectual achievements rely on basic elements that are themselves not graspable, but that the intelligible principles of existence are basically impenetrable. And as for the *logoi* having an infinitely divisible nature, Plotinus, as a good Platonist, seems to be uncomfortable with an infinity of that sort. The truly existing things are both determinate and finite in number.[154]

In the case of the *Theaetetus*, M. Burnyeat and G. Fine have argued that Plato not only recognises the dilemma of unknowable basic elements, but also solves it.[155] The solution lies in structure and order. If *logos* is an ordered

[154] What he does think is that the intelligible has some sort of infinity, an infinity of power for example, but that once one starts counting entities, be they forms or *logoi*, for them to have a determined and countable nature implies that they are ultimately finite in number (VI.5.8.40; VI.6.2.1–10). For this reason V.7.1.12 and V.7.3.20–2 in which he claims that there is an infinity of forming principles (for individual worms, for instance) seem surprising. The same oddity is repeated by Seneca in his exposition of Platonic metaphysics (*Ep.* 58.19). A loose way of using the word 'infinite' may have been common. Another possible explanation might be at VI.2.22.13 ff. where Plotinus quotes, as he says, Plato's cryptic remark in *Prm*. 144b–c that substance (*ousia*) is cut up to infinity. He explains it as meaning that in so far as the division conducted by the intellect concerns genera, that is, arriving at different forms, it is not infinite, but limited by the number of forms. Yet something that he calls the ultimate form (*to eschaton eidos*; lines 16–17) which is not divided into specific forms, is somehow more infinite. And he then quotes again Plato, *Phlb.* 16e. Plotinus' system requires that: (a) the intelligible is determined, stable and hence finite; and (b) the power of the One is infinite, and so is its power of emanation, in which the Intellect, too, participates. If the Intellect is considered from that point of view, not just as that which makes discriminations and definitions with regard to the emanation from the One, it is infinite. And finally, (c) this power is displayed to us in the sensible realm by the apparently infinite amount of variations there are in nature. For human discursive reasoning, even the finite number of possible combinations of seminal forming principles, which, moreover, recur in reincarnation, looks infinite. (He might also read *Prm.* 144b 'greatest and smallest things' as saying that no matter how many times you divide some one thing, even if infinitely many, you will still have existence left; that is, it is infinite in the sense of being *sui generis*, a thing not divisible in the same sense as corporeal things are.) Cf. IV.3.8.35–9 and VI.4.13.20–6.

[155] Burnyeat 1990: 192–9; Fine 1979: 366–97.

and structured whole, something more than just the sum of its parts, it is possible, in addition to naming, to locate and interrelate the elements. They are not strictly unknowable but can be grounded in something.

We have already seen that Plotinus assigns a central role to structure and order.[156] His intelligible hierarchy, even though not complete nor in any spatial arrangement, has nothing haphazard in it. Furthermore, he seems to think that anything moulded by any one form will have a beautiful arrangement. To be beautiful, a thing must be brought into unity by a form (I.6.2.18–29; cf. *Grg.* 503d–504d).[157] Forms give beauty and unity to the sensible by organising them into well-structured and harmonious wholes. This structure is due to an organised set of *logoi*. Similarly, our understanding of forms relies on their being complex in the ways explicated above. For an embodied human mind, to approach a form of human being, for example, involves realising that human beings usually have hands and eyes, and that they are rational living beings. Conversely, to understand the *logos* of hands, one has to know to what greater unity or structure hands belong and what is their place in it. This kind of ordered structure makes the entities not just beautiful but ordered wholes – graspable individuals with internal coherence and a determinate nature.

Individuals and soul-forms

Above, we have seen the general structure that explains the unity and intelligibility of human beings. But what about individuality and individuation? In VI.5.8.40 ff. Plotinus at least denies that there are forms for individual instances of fire, because of the possibility of their being infinite, and because it would be absurd to hold that two joint fires which were distinctively lit in the same matter are different fires. This need not, however, be incompatible with the idea of soul-forms of humans. One might claim, for instance, that if the universe recurs, the number of human souls need not be infinite even if the number of their bodily expressions, persons, were, and since living beings are not like fire or water, but can be clearly separated from each other physically as well as in description, soul-forms would not violate the theory in that respect.

[156] In addition to the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* discuss order, arrangement and harmony both in the cosmos and in the soul. Also, order is central for the Stoics and their account of physical reality governed by *logos*/*logoi* (e.g., LS 46G), and Aristotle seems to think that arrangement is important, but that soul is prior to it, i.e., not itself just harmony (e.g., *De an*. 407b27–408a28).

[157] For the same quote, see below, p. 150.

That Plotinus thought of souls as something *like* forms is affirmed at I.1.2.6–7, but it remains unclear what is meant by this. In the context, he is mainly interested in claiming that the soul as the formal side of human beings, as opposed to the material side, remains at all times unaffected. As the *Phaedo* suggests, the Platonic immortal soul must be indestructible. Therefore Plotinus thinks that it must stay unaffected even during embodiment. Soul can act on body and make it change without itself being affected.[158] But as has hopefully become clear, for Plotinus being an indestructible intelligible entity does not require being absolutely simple (nor does it require, necessarily, that the entity be a *form*).[159]

What is often considered as the best evidence for the forms of individuals is the following text where Plotinus gives a reason for there being distinct principles for different embodied individuals in the intelligible realm:

> One human being as a model would then do for all human beings, just as a limited [number] of souls produces an infinity of human beings. No, for different individuals it is not possible for there to be the same *logos*, and one human being will not serve as a paradigm for several human beings differing from each other not only with respect to matter but with a vast number of peculiar differences. *Human beings are not related to their archetype like portraits of Socrates are to theirs*, *but the different making must result from different* logoi.[160] The whole revolution [of the universe] contains all the *logoi*, and [it produces] the same things again according to the same *logoi*. (V.7.1.16–23)

Since people have different structures, Plotinus reasons, it seems unlikely that all human beings could be formed according to one, single form. The forming principles must be different.[161] What is denied is that human beings with different characteristics could be like bronze statues made according to one and the same model, differing merely in respect to the bit of bronze they are cast in. That would be the point about the portraits of Socrates. But as I see it, the text is not necessarily saying anything about forms of individuals.

The text is from the short tractate, later labelled as *On the Question Whether There Are Ideas of Particulars*, which starts by making the claim that if every one of us has the possibility to ascend to the higher hypostases, the principle of all of us must be there. The rest of the tractate, however, leaves

[158] III.6.4.38–43. The whole theme of III.6 is this impassivity. For comments, cf. Fleet 1995.

[159] Otherwise the intelligibles would not be eternal, because only the One is absolutely simple.

[160] οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἱ εἰκόνες Σωκράτους πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, ἀλλὰ δεῖ τὴν διάφορον ποίησιν ἐκ διαφόρων λόγων.

[161] Many scholars find here good evidence for forms of individuals. E.g., Kalligas 1997 and Gerson 1994 (esp. 74–7); Armstrong 1984: 220 (introductory note to the translation).

the question of immortal souls and ponders on individuation, individual characteristics, and their passing on in generation. Somewhat misleadingly, I think, Porphyry has placed this treatise together with the treatises which deal with the Intellect and its contents, the forms. In the chronological ordering, however, this *Ennead* comes after II.6 titled *On Substance, or On Quality* in which the central claim is that essential differentiations, like two-footed/four-footed, should be regarded not as Aristotelian qualities, but as activities of substance and formative principle. Even many qualities, like white, are due to *logoi*; they are just not necessary for the specific essence of things which can, say, have other colours as well.[162]

The treatise on particular human beings and animals follows this discussion quite logically. Plotinus goes on to explain that it seems that in particulars, and especially in human beings, there are specific qualities that are quite crucial for them to be the individuals they are (Socrates is Socrates and Pythagoras is Pythagoras). These characteristics cannot be explained simply as ugliness or failure, and therefore it is likely that they are due to *logoi* as well, and hence ultimately due to the intelligible order, and not to matter.

In the beginning of the V.7.1 Plotinus asks whether there is an 'idea' (*idea*) of each particular. In what follows he first offers two possibilities. First, if there is a soul of the particular person Socrates, and if this soul is eternal, there must be a form that could be called 'Socrates-itself' (*Autosōkratēs*). Or, second, if reincarnation as some other personality is possible, no individuality at all can be due to the intelligible principles. Plotinus endorses neither of these options as such. As he goes on to say quite explicitly, each eternal soul contains all forming principles there are in the intelligible, not only of human being but of all individual animals as well. This is connected to the idea attested elsewhere of souls as intelligible universes. By arrangement, each soul is said to be of the same form as the soul of the whole universe.[163] Reincarnation as another person is possible because each soul has all the *logoi* there are, and therefore the disposition to be any person. Note also that no claims are made about the Intellect, nor about the forms or individual persons. It is attested only that the soul must have some principles both for human being and for all individual animals.[164]

From the point of view of individuation, this does not seem very promising. Is the intelligible order inhabited by exactly identical soul-forms? That

[162] II.6.1.30–41; cf. II.6.2.14–29.

[163] ψυχῆς τῆς κόσμου ὁμοειδὴς διάθεσις: III.4.6.23; cf. 3.21–2. And even as a collection of all forming principles of living things, the soul is yet finite since the universe as a whole recurs (V.7.1.7–14).

[164] V.7.1.10–12.

might be seen to imply that since they are identical, they are in fact just one and the same form. Another equally unpleasant option is to think of souls as instantiations of the form of living being. In both cases, they all contain the forming principles of all living things. Once embodied, souls like this must be differentiated by the bit of matter they are instantiated in. This would mean that matter determines not just individual differences but even differences between species! But this, of course, is an impossible view to attribute to Plotinus, who thinks that matter is only responsible for imperfection, and therefore the principle of individuation must be found on the formal side of an entity. Were that not the case, he argues, there would be only one perfect entity of every kind, and all the others would be contrary to nature.[165]

Individuality, as the above quotation makes clear, is due to *different logoi*. As was stated earlier in the chapter, the most typical usage of the term *logoi* is the unfolded, creative 'emanation' of the forms. Plotinus' choice of terminology indicates that he is not stressing the status of individuals as separable, intelligible forms.

But let us have a look at another passage usually used as evidence for soul-forms:

> But if the form of human being is there [in the intelligible realm], and of rational and artistic human being, and the arts are products of Intellect, then it must be said that there are forms (*ta eidē*) of universal things (*ta katholou*), not of Socrates but of human being. And we must ask of human being, whether severally [they are there] – by severally I mean that the same thing is different for each (*to de kathekaston, hoti to auto allo allō*)[166] – so that, for example, snubness and aquilinity would have to be places in the form because one is snub-nosed and another aquiline, just as there are differences of animal; but matter is responsible for one human being having one kind of aquiline nose and one another. And some differences in colour are contained in the forming principle (*en logō*) but others are produced by matter and by different places. (V.9.12.1–11)

Humans share certain common features, but also manifest (bodily) differences. Recurrent differences like aquilinity or snubness of nose are due to the forming principles. At least some of these are determined by what *logoi* are active in parents, thus forming a causal chain of generation.[167] Some differences, it seems, like the individual differences in the aquilinity of a nose, are solely due to matter. The intelligible order does not contain

[165] V.7.2.12–14.

[166] It has been customary to delete the denial (*mē*) from this sentence as it seems to make sense in its context only without it.

[167] V.7.2.1–12.

principles for differently aquiline noses. The way matter receives formal power may determine such differences that are not crucial for the constitution and structure of a unified thing of a particular sort.

To take the treatise as evidence for the forms of individuals calls for a specific reading of the first lines where Plotinus seems to postulate just ordinary forms and not forms of particulars.[168] On this quite possible reading, the denial is taken to be rhetorical, followed by an account in which, in fact, soul-forms are postulated. However, the following interpretation seems equally plausible: the denial in the beginning is not an answer to the question whether there are forms of individuals or not, but a partial answer to the question what, if anything, would require a postulation of them. The mere existence of artistic and scientific human beings is not such a thing, for arts and sciences have their principles in the intelligible along with the form of human being.[169] Aquilinity or snubness of noses are other candidates for a proof of the existence of soul-forms.

But in the end, those candidates also fail. By claiming that 'the same is different in different people' (line 5) Plotinus means, straightforwardly, that the same form is different in different people. Certain individual differences, it is said explicitly, are due to '*diaphorai*' (lines 7–8) in the form of human being. In the context of V.7 we already came across what Plotinus there called '*idikai diaphorai*' (1.21), many differences peculiar to individuals. Here, as there, they are something *in* or *because of* the form of human being.[170] But they do not resemble Stoic individual differences of which every person has one, his or her own proper differentia. What Plotinus is interested in are the many variations that each human being exhibits in relation to the form of human being. Individual bodily differences are determined either by matter or by a certain *combination* of differences inside

[168] Kalligas (1997: 210), Rist (1963: 224, 227) and Gerson (1994: 77–8) share this view, whereas Armstrong (1977: 53–5) takes Plotinus in V.9.11 to be saying that (a) the existence of arts and sciences, and of human beings that are in them, gives no logical necessity to postulate forms of individuals but forms of universals, and b) bodily characteristics can be explained by either different matter or differences (*diaphorai*) in the form of human being. According to him, the next chapter (V.9.12) refers to the account of human being as an everlasting inhabitant of the intelligible world, consistent with the idea of forms of individuals, but not dependent on it. In this, Armstrong follows Igal 1973. H. J. Blumenthal, on the other hand, called the treatise a 'clear denial' of forms of particulars in his earlier study, but left the whole passage out of his more recent article about soul and intellect in Plotinus. Blumenthal 1966 *passim*, esp. 62 (containing a very useful list of references to forms of individuals); cf. also his 1996: 99–100.

[169] Plotinus makes a further distinction between arts which have to do with the sensible and with perception, and ones which are, rather, about intelligible proportion. The principles for the latter are directly found in the intelligible, the principles for the former only in so far as they make use of some kind of proportion, or through the form of human being (V.9.11).

[170] V.9.12.6–8.

the form of human being. In the above analysis, qualities were said to be due to intelligible *logoi*, which already points in the direction of individuality being due to differentiations which are governed by *logoi*.

There may also be more to the example of snubness and aquilinity than is evident at first sight. The example is, of course, Aristotelian. Snubness and aquilinity are *contrary* properties of noses. If the form of human being is supposed to contain the principles for crucial differences and variants of itself, it would contain contraries, and these should be structured so as to form consistent and unified wholes without inner tensions.[171]

Each combination that can or will be instantiated in matter exists in the intelligible as a possibility of embodiment. In this sense there can be said to be principles, *logoi* or formations not just of properties like aquilinity but of individual human beings. But these collections of *logoi* are forms only in a very loose sense of the word. They are patterns that determine which set of properties contained in the form of human being it is possible to instantiate in matter so that the resulting organism is and remains a human being. They are not forms for one important reason: they are logical parts of forms, that is, possibilities within the form of human being. None of them includes all properties a human being could have, or represents all possible collections of properties a human being could instantiate.

To treat these rational patterns on a par with forms which explain the repeatable features of the world would be a mistake not just because of their extension – the form of human being is one over many and *Autosōkratēs* is one over one – but because only the fact that they are or will be instantiated makes them individuals. In a certain sense, they are incomplete images of the form of human being. They retain its essence and thereby the completing properties of human beings but display also a certain deficiency typical for the lower stages of emanation. This, I believe, is what Plotinus refers to by the claim that the *logos* is inseparable from matter unlike the form.[172] As rational principles, the existence of *logoi* is not dependent on matter as such, but they are entities that explain the details and differences of any one entity that will be instantiated in the material realm.

Real forms are completely actualised, that is, complete collections of all possible differentiations, plus a complete set of 'laws' – some kind of non-propositional principles or rules – about their possible combinations. A principle of this kind could be expressed as, for instance, the following

[171] This may be what Plotinus refers to at VI.7.10.1–7 where he claims that things like horns must be in the intelligible for it to be complete, and for the individual to be complete *as an individual* (ἕκαστον δὲ ὡς ἕκαστον τέλειον; line 7).

[172] II.7.3.10–15.

law: 'rational animals are always also two-footed.' An individual is always an actualisation of only some properties and some laws. The Intellect and the forms stand primarily for the repeatable and substantial features of the universe, unifying different properties into meaningful wholes. Secondarily, through the principles governing the possible combinations of all properties, they stand also for accidental differentiations. But they stand only derivatively for the actually instantiated possibilities or collections of properties in the material realm, that is, particulars.[173]

Now the fact that Plotinus is committed to some kind of Principle of Plenitude,[174] that is, to the above-mentioned idea that everything that can be instantiated actually will be instantiated, may lead one to think that forms of individuals ought to have a higher status as something that necessarily will be instantiated. Because it is necessary for every individual variation of the form of human being to be instantiated in matter, and because they are all already encoded in the emanation proceeding from the One, it is proper to call them forms and to expect them to have their principle in the intelligible. In a sense this is true. Collections of *logoi* within the form of a human being can be considered as a middle step in between the form of human being and *logoi*, say, of its parts. The principles for individual human beings are preserved in the intelligible, as are their shapes and *logoi* (VI.7.10.10–11). However, from the fact that a thing will be instantiated in matter it follows only that its principle in one way or another can be found in the intelligible, but it does not follow that it must deserve the status of form *in the same sense* as generic forms. As far as I know, Plotinus never mentions Leibniz's idea of a species with only one member. Furthermore, outside that distinction, he continues to follow the descending order of creation not only to individuals but all the way to their parts and details.

The above picture must, however, still accommodate the already mentioned Plotinian dogma, that of every soul being a 'noetic cosmos' (III.4.3.22). Not only are all souls imprints of Soul, displaying the *logoi* of the Intellect in a further unfolded way, but they contain all the same

[173] E. Emilsson pointed out to me that I may have more difficulties in drawing a distinction between the form of human being and a *logos* of an individual. If the form of human being is a composite of animality and rationality, do we need a form of human being at all? And if we do, why not a form of an individual as a composite of certain principles? My preliminary answer follows these lines: the form of human being is not just a composite, but a *structured* unity of such parts as animality and rationality. It is also the *recurring* structure that these are found in. For the individual to be a coherent whole it needs to participate in this kind of unity. Moreover, since unity has an important place in the hierarchy of goodness and universality, it must be explained by the form of human being rather than a form of an individual.

[174] Formulated by A. Lovejoy in the following way: 'no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled.' Lovejoy 1936: 52.

logoi, all the *logoi* there are. This means that our soul contains also the *logoi* needed for the soul to reincarnate as a horse or a dog.[175] By appealing to the potential–actual distinction Plotinus can explain both the existence of different species and the individual differences due to the soul. Although all souls are essentially one and the same, different parts of them may be actualised. But this, I suggest, happens differently in the case of species and in the case of individual differences.

Let us first consider the case of species. What are species forms needed for if every living thing has a soul which includes principles for all kinds of differences, both species-distinctions and individual ones? And yet that there is such a thing as the form of human being or the form of horse is not in doubt, nor is the fact that every human is human because of the participation relationship he has to the form of human being. That participation, presumably, determines that in humans only *logoi* appropriate to human beings are actualised, ruling out any possibilities that belong to the forms of other species. But it also gives the bundle of human-like properties unity. As we have seen, the form of human being is one, a unified and structured entity. Every human being displays not just the human-like properties but what it is to be (one) human being, a fully structured and determined whole. On this view, in incarnation as an animal, the human soul could retain the same soul but cease to participate in the form of human being.

Individual differences may come about through the same overall system – participation in the form of human being – but they are dependent on the particular place, time and situation the individual happens to be born in. The soul of the All has done some preparation which the individual soul coming to reside in that particular part of it must take into account.[176] One way of making sense of this doctrine is parental endowment. Children, for instance, receive forming principles from their parents. In this way, they receive the same species-form as all other human beings but in some individuals some *logoi* of the form of human being are actualised, in others not exactly the same collection of them.[177] Each parent has all of them,

[175] IV.9.4.16–21, 5.1–8; V.7.1.7–10; VI.7.7.1–8.

[176] VI.7.7.8–17. On how and to what extent that which receives affects the outcome: Wagner 1986.

[177] V.7.1. When Plotinus combines this with the *Ti.* 42b–c on the human soul reincarnating as an animal, a further dilemma is created. If every soul is equally every living being, because each can reincarnate as a beast, are human beings distinctively human only in the sensible realm? Could even the species distinction exist only in the hypostasis Soul or sensible realm, and not in the Intellect? This, of course, does not go well with what Plotinus says elsewhere. Plotinus thought, rather, that (1) there are such things as particularly rational human souls, i.e., that have the disposition to become embodied human beings, and that (2) some of them become bad and end up in animal bodies in reincarnation; moreover, (3) not all animal bodies contain human souls (VI.7.6.21–7.6; I.1.8–15).

but a different set is ready for use, that is, actualised at different times.[178] Every time an individual living being is generated, it will, by the necessities of the material realm, be an instantiation of one possible set of actualised differentiations – and a disposition towards future actualisations. And the actualised differentiations are due to the particular circumstances pure soul finds herself in regarding the embodiment: the parents, the environment, etc. But, again, this does not mean that the individual is just a bundle of *logoi* because he is unified by participating in the form of human being. He has the same basic structure as every living being of that kind, but his individuality is determined by the actualised human *logoi* only.

Whether or not the same applies to the non-bodily differentiations of persons is more difficult to determine. In one instance, it does look as if that might be the case:

> Besides their bodies, *being different happens very much by character, and by the activities of discursive reason* and as a result of the lives lived before; for [Plato] says that the souls' choices take place according to the lives lived. And if one considers the nature of the soul on the whole, the differences in souls have been mentioned in those passages too where there was talk of 'seconds' and 'thirds', and it was said that all [souls] are all [things], but [they are] each/particular according to that which is active in it: that is, *by one* [*being*] *united with actuality*, but another manifests itself in inquiry, another in longing, and in that [activity] different souls look at different things, and what they look at, they are and become. (IV.3.8.7–16; cf. 6.27–38)[179]

The soul is again stated to be all things of which only some are in a state of actualisation in any one individual. The individual characteristics and the differing states and ways of the reasoning capacity are determined by the soul, by what happens to be active in the soul.

The doctrine referred to here seems, however, different from the one explaining particularities of bodily formations. The 'seconds' and the 'thirds' refer to the materials the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* uses for making human souls. Plotinus interprets this as meaning that the souls are in different states of virtue and rationality, and their status in the sensible realm is determined by this state. Depending on the state of the soul, it comes to be actualised as a virtuous and happy human being or as a wretched thing, or even to be incarnated as a being lower than any human person, hence as an animal. Plotinus does not make any mention of *logoi*, and elsewhere he has interesting things to say about attending to different things. Humans have the capacity, for instance, to concentrate on and be aware of their bodily demands, or, if they so choose, of their inner, rational realms. That,

[178] V.7.2.1–6. Cf. Aristotle who also mentions *logos* (*tēs kinēseōs*) in *Gen. an.* 767b; Kalligas 1997: 212–13.
[179] Note that here my translation differs somewhat radically from that of Armstrong.

of course, is not just a matter of which *logoi* one happens to have inherited from one's parents, but also of one's philosophical training, the voluntary element of the soul, etc. What may be at issue are such personal characteristics which can be shaped and developed by the person himself and which affect the status the person has now and in the future in the hierarchy of virtue and goodness.

It is clear from elsewhere that Plotinus did believe that people could be musical or literary by nature. He was also aware that by nature some people are, for instance, more irascible than others. Again, he resorts to the demiurgic creation of Plato's *Timaeus* in which the Demiurge himself gives humans the principle of the soul, whereas moral characters, characteristic actions and passions are given by the lesser gods.[180] This would seem to suggest that the first ensoulment of the body probably by the Soul of the All had a large role to play not just in material but also in psychological characteristics and dispositions. The form of human being contains the forming principles needed for the genesis of different individual human bodies, as well as for most psychological features and characteristics of human beings. Inside the form of human being there are all combinations of forming principles that at least once have been or can be actualised in one instantiation. And among these patterns is where 'we' find ourselves, *as composites, as embodied individuals*.

Eternal souls or mere possibilities?

If successful, the above account explains how and why distinct embodied individuals differ from each other without (1) postulating *forms* of individuals for which, after all, the evidence has always seemed scarce and puzzling; and without (2) any appeal to matter as the sole or most important principle of individuation – something that Plotinus for other reasons is unwilling to allow. But it leaves open the question of the status of individual souls and intellects as entities over and above whatever constitutes and ensouls living bodies. Individual souls are supposed to be inhabitants of the eternal and intelligible realm in their own right, with their own contributions to the way the universe has turned and will turn out to be, and with a possibility of ascent from the incarnated state to their fully intellectual source. But I have claimed that individuality lies at the lower levels of emanation in which particular images of the species-form become unfolded. The dilemma this creates could be summarised in the following question: what kind of individual, intellectual and eternal existence could a mere possibility have?

[180] *Ti.* 41–2; II.3.9.7–14; VI.3.18.19–21.

There are strong reasons to take this question seriously. First, in order for the possibility of ascent to the intelligible to be a true possibility for *me*, that is, to give a personal promise of a better life to come for the self I am now, my particular selfhood, the 'I', had better not be just something that will be disposed of very early in that development. Second, in several ways, Plotinus gives individuality worth and significance: as we have seen, the individual souls contribute to the creation of the complete whole sensible realm.[181] They have some choice. They are not simply predestined to act according to the forming principles and the world-order they sustain.[182] Plotinus argues that the human soul is not just a part of the Soul of the All, but it is intellective in the same degree, and therefore of the same species rather than a mere part of it. Although all souls are in a sense one, each human soul is independent because each one itself contemplates (*noein*). Human souls are all rational (*logikoi*) in the same sense as the universe is rational, and they all exhibit their own thinking (*oikeia hē noēsis*). If the soul of an individual were merely a part of the whole, the soul of the All would do the thinking, but because each individual soul is rational, it must be an individual whole.[183] As subjects of intellection, souls are real unities and individuals, not merely dependent parts of something bigger and higher.

To strengthen the special status of souls, they are said to have many aspects peculiar to Platonic forms, and they are said to be 'kind of', 'like' or 'as it were' forms (*eidos ti an eiē*; I.1.2.6). Like forms, souls are atemporal, and immortal – the familiar feature of the soul depicted in the *Phaedo*. They are further described as admitting nothing from outside, i.e., they are unaffected (*apathēs*), beyond any motion or change, impassible or incorruptible (*aphthartos*), and unmixed. Being incomposite entails being indivisible, and hence immortal. Souls are also self-sufficient (*autarkes*), and essentially simple in so far as they do not go through any additions but remain in their essential nature. They have immanent activity.[184] This activity, displayed in composites, belongs to the formal side of the entity; it is what the soul is.[185] Souls resemble forms also in that they recur. Even

[181] IV.3.13.1–8; VI.7.7.9–17. I am grateful to Michael Frede for insisting on the significance of this contribution in a discussion.

[182] III.1.7–8. In this he is criticising the Stoics. He seems to think that their theories about physics and ethics are mutually incompatible.

[183] IV.3.1.16 ff. (the people he opposes here seem to be other Platonists or at least people who quote Plato); 3.27–31.

[184] ἑαυτῷ δὲ συμφυᾶ ἔχον τὴν ἐνέργειαν. I.1.2, esp. line 8. Cf. III.6.4.34–8. See e.g., *Phd.* 78d; 79d.

[185] IV.4.16.18–19. There is no reason to read this literally saying that (individual) soul is *a* form. Plotinus talks generally about soul being form and power as opposed to soul and matter together being that which controls and ordains the living being.

though there is always only one instantiation of any one soul at any one time, in the course of time a soul may be reinstantiated, reincarnated. In a sense, they escape the general–particular distinction, they are one over many in temporal succession.

But just as nothing in the *Phaedo* suggests that the soul which knows forms would itself be a form or an idea – it is said to be like the realm of forms, but not directly one of them (81a–b) – none of the above points forces that view upon Plotinus. In fact, he once comes very close to directly denying that souls are forms. At VI.9.1.20–6 he claims that the soul is other than form, and it has the same relationship both to oneness and to 'human being'. In itself, it is neither of them but becomes both one and human by 'looking' at the higher oneness and the intelligible 'human being' – that is, by having a right kind of relation to the One and to the form of human being.

What is more challenging is the above-mentioned idea that each soul has its own creative activity and reasoning capacity. According to Paul Kalligas, for instance, the central and active role of rationality given to souls by Plotinus was a major motivation for the postulation of soul-*forms*: 'it is the ability of each individual human being to return to his intelligible origin by making use of the essential features that makes it necessary to postulate a different form for each human being.'[186] Admittedly, the active capacity to understand the intelligible order of the cosmos would seem to suggest a more honourable place in – or above – that cosmos. And indeed, there is textual evidence to suggest such a thing:

> But how will there still be your soul, a soul of this particular human being, and one yet another's? Is there a particular soul according to the lower [realm], but no particular according to the higher [realm] but just that [higher soul?]. But that way Socrates, and the soul of Socrates, will exist whenever he is in the body; and he will perish just when he comes to be in the best [realm]. Now things which [truly] exist do not perish: since the intellects there do not perish into unity, because they are not corporeally divided, but remain each in difference, having the same essential being. So too the *souls* which one after another take on themselves a particular intellect (*kath' hekaston noun exērtēmenai*), and *are* logoi *of intellects* (*logoi nōn ousai*), further unfolded than them, having become, as it were, much out of that which was little. They are linked to the simple by that in each of them which is least divided. They also willed to be divided but cannot reach complete division; they keep sameness and difference; each soul remains one, and all are one together. (IV.3.5.1–14)

[186] Kalligas 1997: 212. In this he is followed by Ferrari 1997: 52.

As in the *Phaedo*, an individual *qua* his soul does not cease to exist in death, but on the contrary, his best and true substance exists always, and not just as immersed in a higher unity.[187] The passage echoes what Plotinus says about existence and oneness: if an individual thing loses its oneness it will not exist at all (VI.9.2.15–16). Being and oneness are distinct features of the same thing, appearing necessarily always together. So if there is to be any kind of personal survival, each soul ought to survive as one, not just as the hypostasis Intellect or Soul. Each soul is a distinct being, an expression of intellect that preserves its identity, and remains one even though all are one together by having a share of both sameness and difference.[188]

The passage also makes clear that the individuality of souls does not depend solely on their having a *history* as embodied individuals, for the souls are said to be expressions of several intellects.[189] Souls are *logoi* of intellects. Interestingly enough, they are not just caused by *logoi*, but rather are *logoi* themselves. Far from solving the problem of their status in my favour, this shifts the problem from souls to intellects. Plotinus sees individual intellects as 'real beings' and, as such, as something basic. And these are distinct from each other not only 'here' but also 'there' – which must mean in the intelligible. Souls' being distinct does not rely only on the fact that they are and will all be instantiated in different bits of matter, nor on their being differentiated on the level of the hypostasis Soul, but on the fact that the principles of which they are expressions are both one and many themselves.

Souls are *logoi* of intellects in the sense of being further unfolded expressions of pure intellects (and not, for instance, their parts). The individual souls and intellects are non-spatial 'parts' of the Soul and the Intellect in a different sense from that in which forms are parts of the Intellect. In fact, Plotinus describes the relation of the hypostasis Intellect to the many intellects as one of species and genera relations (VI.2.20.23–7). Forms are the contents of the Intellect, not a species of it, whereas the intellects have the same overall formation or structure as the Intellect itself. They are different from it since it constitutes their source and whole, their genus. The Intellect is actually the genus, and the possibility of any one of the intellects; and the intellects are actually themselves, but only potentially the whole, that

[187] For this, see Gerson 1994: 6–7; Wagner 1997.

[188] As chapter 3.2 will show, this means that the souls are not just numerically different from one another but have some peculiar differences. These souls being the same can mean just them being the same kinds of things, but also something stronger, that is, some kind of identity with Soul and with each other.

[189] The doctrine of many rather than one Intellect is repeated at IV.8.3.10–16 and any exclusive role of history in the coming to be of several persons is explicitly denied at VI.4.14.16–22.

is, the Intellect. This, I suggest, is what Plotinus refers to in the passage cited above, in which he speaks about souls taking on themselves 'a particular intellect' (*kath' hekaston nous*). There are versions of the Intellect that are particular in the sense of having a propensity to actualise certain *logoi*. These are further unfolded in souls that articulate these propensities further.

Like the Intellect, the many intellects *include* all the forms and all the *logoi*, and see, or, rather, contemplate them.[190] They are not just one of them. They are neither Platonic nor Aristotelian forms because they share more in common with the active thinking and creating structure, the whole Intellect, that which encompasses the forms, than any one of its objects. Individual intellects are not parts of the form of human being, but parts of the active thinking Intellect itself.[191] Similarly the souls are primarily the powers of the soul – its faculties – and secondarily all the *logoi* there are. Unlike the Soul of the All, individual souls just cannot exhibit everything they have *logoi* of.[192]

The Greeks held a double conception of the soul: it is the seat of consciousness as well as the life-giving force.[193] In Plotinus' thought, as we have seen, the rational soul is distinct from the so-called forming soul which determines bodily shapes and formations and quite possibly many dispositions and psychological characteristics.[194] Since the individual rational soul in some sense chooses the body it comes to be embodied in, these characteristics cannot be haphazardly given. Unfortunately, the details concerning the relationship between the rational soul and the forming soul – the soul of the All? – are somewhat obscure. Yet what is clear is that the dual aspect of human existence gets very different treatments from Plotinus. In themselves, the souls are causes over and above the causal structure of nature (*kosmikēs aitias exō*) where at least bodily differences, changes, generation and destruction of sensible things are governed by forming principles. The coming to be in a body makes souls also a part of the physical order of

[190] VI.2.22.1–6.

[191] I read *eidos* and *logos* at I.6.6.13–15 as a reference to (1) soul's causal power to make, choose etc., (2) pure soul's non-bodily nature, and (3) these being, together with the Intellect itself, identical to their objects of thought, the Platonic forms.

[192] IV.3.6.11–24. [193] Kalligas 2000: 26–7; 1997: 221.

[194] *hē plattousa psuchē*; V.3.9.4–5. At IV.3.5.17–18 Plotinus concludes with the idea that the soul which stays with the Intellect – presumably the Soul of the All – is also a *logos* of the Intellect, and is itself further unfolded to partial and immaterial expressions or *logoi*. Owing to the brevity and obscurity of the passage, it is unclear to me whether these refer to different 'possibilities' within the world, that is, features and properties in the world, or specifically to human souls. I am tempted to interpret these *logoi* as referring to bodily formations and as such having slightly different functions from the souls understood as expressions of intellects.

things (III.1.8.4–11). The fact that souls are incarnated ties them to the causal system of these *logoi* which, as we shall see in chapter 4, limits their own power of reasoning, contribution and choice.[195]

Individuality may not, however, be solely connected to descent of the souls to the bodies. It is possible that since the intellects and especially their expressions, the souls, have some individuality of their own, this will indirectly affect the bodily characteristics the embodied individual comes to have. Individual souls may choose or strive to be in or realise one kind of body rather than another. Nonetheless, embodied human beings, as well as their status as individuals, result from two perhaps mutually dependent but rather different causal systems: independent rational souls or intellects and the laws of material and bodily nature governed by forms and *logoi*.

The above two subsections have shown several ways in which the embodied self is, by necessity, a deficient entity when compared to the higher or inner soul, or self, which is more stable and God-like than mere embodiment could possibly allow. The embodied human being is not a perfect unity. It is never complete owing to its (a) existing always part by part, and (b) exemplifying only a set of the properties that a form of human being can generate. The embodied individual can overcome some of this deficiency by existing throughout the entire length of life to which it has been assigned, and especially by manifesting as much humanity and rationality as possible (in ways that we shall see in the later chapters). But even the fullest and best life possible will leave the embodied human as a deficient part of a human being, an individual.[196] Our perfection cannot, therefore, be connected with embodied human existence, but rather with those aspects of our being not in the same way hindered by this deficiency.

The deficiency in question is not, however, an exclusively negative issue. First, being a deficient member of the human species and *a* soul or *an* intellect rather than a perfect species of one's own ties each self to the world and to the teleological intelligible structure of the *kosmos*, thus yielding to them shared and ideal ends and directions. Second, deficiency is tied to uniqueness, to which Plotinus is not entirely impervious. Human individuality has its own place and significance. The multiplicity and variation of creation has its own beauty, and even more valuable than the perceived differences of composites are the intellectual dispositions of souls and

[195] This may create the further dilemma as to how they differ from one another when pure and separated from the body, from memories etc. This option is explored by Sorabji 2005: vol. 3, chs. 17–18. Sen 2000 argues that the individual differences are due to being in a body. Cf. chapter 3.2.

[196] III.2.14.17–20.

intellects. This individuality is necessary for beings who wish to be themselves and not to melt into togetherness. It is essential, as we shall later see, for their autonomy as thinkers.

Furthermore, considered on its own terms, Plotinus' choice to treat human individuals as composites not just of soul and body but of two different causal systems may be a rather ingenious way to tackle individuality. If individuality is tied to deficiency and matter, it does not fare well as an object of knowledge, thus running the risk of leaving individuals unknowable. Plotinus accepts this and argues, as we shall later see, that the proper object of self-knowledge is the perfect higher self, but shows that through the system of *logoi*, particularity and individuality, too, may be approached in a systematic manner.

The first part of the book also gives rise to a new concern about unity, namely the relation between the perfect higher self and the embodied self, be that the discursive thinker or the embodied soul in a wider sense. Self as a composite and self as the pure timeless intellectual capacity seem from many viewpoints to be distinct entities within one 'I', and their self-knowledge, too, seems to be of different objects and sorts. The following two chapters of the book address, among other things, the question whether the two souls, and moreover the two selves, are in relevant ways connected.

CHAPTER 2

The conscious centre

The ontology of the last chapter divided human nature and selfhood into branching layers with a variety of sources. We are composites of soul and body, of forms and a material aspect organised by forms. The relation between individual rational subjectivity and the composite person with both a body and living functions is problematic. Furthermore, embodied selves are temporal creatures whose existence extends in time. Their identity is threatened, in that they never exist 'all at once', but with past and future horizons, or even parts. The self seems to be split into two radically different kinds of beings: unchanging and unified immortal souls or intellects and divided as well as multifaceted temporal and material composites. Yet every self and subject is also one: human beings are individuals, in that they exist as determinate beings in one body both at a time and through time. According to the simplest explanation, it is the soul and its formal power that gives human individuals their unity. As a non-spatial principle of organisation, it is by definition a principle of unity, too. So far, however, the organisation and unity endowed by such a principle to the composite has been mostly material: it is the structure of the extended thing as well as the future constitution of living things. But human beings are not just well-organised material bodies or even beautiful plant-like things with organised growth and lifespan. They move in co-ordinated ways and they experience themselves as unified centres of experience. Indeed, Plotinus believes that subjects are more unified than mere bodies. First, souls are not divisible into material parts and are thus more truly one than extended things.[1] Second, subjects of mental functions have an awareness that unifies them to single subjects of consciousness.

[1] IV.1.[4]1.17–29. Note that I follow here A. H. Armstrong's numbering. In Henry and Schwyzer, this Ennead is printed first but bears the number of IV.2. Like all intelligibles; VI.4 *passim* deals with the presence of being in everywhere, esp. VI.4.2.

The two following sections (2.1 and 2.2) are devoted to the ways in which human subjects rise above the divisions that threaten them on the ontological level. In the introduction as well as in section 2.1, the focus is especially on those capacities with which the soul endows human beings, and which make them unified loci of perception and consciousness. This discussion concerns mostly what can be called synchronic awareness, that is, awareness 'at a time'. Section 2.2 concentrates on diachronic questions about continuity of conscious awareness, memory and personal identity. The chapter is designed to answer several worries raised in the course of the first chapter on ontology, reversing, however, the order of synchronic and diachronic treatment.

Note that in addition to the problems connected with our temporal nature, the division between a higher, non-temporal and non-material self and a temporal self in the material existence repeats itself in psychology. There are two kinds of cognition (to be discussed at some length in chapter 3): a non-temporal, non-representational and perfect contemplation of the forms, *noein* – the function of the intellect, *nous* – and the temporal succession of thoughts and experiences mediated by the faculty of appearance, *phantasia*. (The latter is further divisible into non-conceptual experiences and into the faculty of inferential and propositional thoughts, *dianoia*.) Thus not only can human subjectivity and awareness be subjected to questions posed from two points of view, synchronic and diachronic, but the human soul also incorporates two modes of functioning, one by its very nature synchronic, the other diachronic. The inquiry must take into account this layered nature of human subjectivity.

As an essential underpinning, Plotinus picks up the idea, presented first in Plato's *Theaetetus* (184d–185b), that human beings enjoy unity of perception. Here is what Plotinus says:

> If something is going to perceive something, it must itself be one and grasp everything by the same [being], both if a number of perceptions come in through many sense organs, or many qualities are perceived with respect to some one thing, or if a varied thing, for example a face, is perceived through one sense organ. For there is not one [perception] of the nose, another of the eyes, but one and the same [perception] of all together. And if one [perception] comes through the eyes and another through hearing, there must be some one thing to which both come. Or how could one say that these [ways of perceiving] are different, if the perceptions did not come together to one and the same [thing]? This then must be like a centre, and like lines coming together from the circumference of the circle, sense perceptions from every side come completed in it, and that which grasps them must be of this kind, a being that is truly one. (IV.7.6.3–15)

There is some one point or function which has the necessary combinatory ability to form wholes out of many perceptible units.[2] The passage draws attention to three different phenomena that can be classified under the general title 'unity of consciousness': unified perception of complex things; unified perception of collections of qualities; and unity of perceptions arriving through different sense organs. The objects of perception are complex material structures. As we have seen, for example, living things are governed by *logoi* which are dispersed in matter thus differentiating the parts of the organism in space. The human mind perceives these things as organised wholes, not as meaningless collections of parts. Each perceived entity is a collection (*sumphorēsis*, as we have seen in chapter 1.1) of qualities that reflect various forms and their formal power. Again, the human mind does not fail to realise the unity that this collection forms, like 'a white man walking', etc. And, finally, even though sense organs exist as distinct entities in different parts of the organism and transmit different kinds of information about the perceptible world, the human mind is such that it can unify this information into a coherent picture of the sensible world. It secures that there are not five distinct worlds, like the seen, the heard, or the touched world, but just one world of sensation within which it is possible to make meaningful comparisons. The talk of subjects and selves becomes properly meaningful only once we examine entities that are one in this special sense, that are unified centres of conscious awareness.

But what is it to be aware in the first place? In Plotinus' view, soul is special in that it is aware of its own functions (*ouk anaisthētos tōn energēmatōn heautēs*; II.9.1.35–6). What differentiates conscious functions from all other functions of the soul is reflexivity. This is an idea that we find in both Plato and Aristotle, and one that has exercised quite a high level of influence. One difficulty involved is the question of whether this awareness is an awareness of another act, or an aspect belonging to the first act – or is even reducible to the first act. In the aporetic dialogue usually considered early, *Charmides* (167c–168a), the participants wonder about the possibility of self-knowledge, but they seem to find absurd the notion of reflexive awareness of one's own perception – at least if such an awareness, like 'seeing that one sees' or 'hearing that one hears', is without any perceptual content. Aristotle assumes that such an awareness is not only possible but has a psychologically and an ethically important role (*EN* 1170a25–b1). In a sense, we perceive or are aware of our own activities, and that reflexive

[2] As has been noted, for Plotinus this is not just an argument about the unity of consciousness, but the very thing that proves the soul's immaterial nature. Emilsson 1991.

function makes us conscious beings. It is unclear which faculty and structure in the soul is responsible for this function. Aristotle insists that it is not a function separate from sense perception itself but somehow its own feature – otherwise one would have to go on *ad infinitum* in postulating a higher function in order to make the lower function aware of itself. In one instance, it seems that the same faculty accountable for unity of perceptual awareness, the so-called *sensus communis* or *koinē aisthēsis*, is also responsible for the reflexivity of sensory affections. If sensation is not complete without the final role played by the *sensus communis*, reflexivity would seem to be an awareness by a faculty separate from the senses themselves, and thus an awareness of another act (*De an*. 425b12–26; *De somno* 455a12–23). Alexander of Aphrodisias, commenting on Aristotle's *De sensu*, postulates more boldly for each perceiving subject an awareness that it itself exists and perceives.[3] Not only is consciousness explained by reflexivity: it is also held that conscious beings are self-reflexively aware of their own *existence*.

Plotinus adopts these views and uses them, among other tools, to prove materialism false. As Plato noted in the *Theaetetus*, when we judge, say, two perceptions as different, the notion of 'different' is not given in the perception itself, and is thus not something that happens in the sense organ while sensing. 'Different', as well as other 'commons' (*ta koina*) – being, not-being, likeness, unlikeness and same – are something Plato famously calls 'the soul functioning through itself' (185e). Plotinus defends this position further by maintaining that it is not enough, for instance, that atoms come together and explain the unity of consciousness required by the use of these terms:

> Nothing that is one and has sympathy comes from bodies which are without feeling and incapable of unification, but the soul feels 'sympathetically' itself (*psuchē de hautē sumpathēs*). (IV.7.3.3–5)

Material things may pass something from one part to another, but there is nothing in them, in Plotinus' view, that would truly unify the parts into one conscious and self-aware whole.[4]

Our subjectivity, as the following section will argue, relies on – and obtains one of its strongest expressions in – a unifying self-awareness. This self-awareness explains unity 'at a time'. Section 2.2 deals with mental

[3] πᾶς γάρ, ὅτε αἰσθάνεται, ἑαυτοῦ ὄντος τε καὶ αἰσθανομένου συναισθάνεται; in *Sens*. 148,10, commenting on 448a22.

[4] Plotinus' argument against Epicureans is discussed by Gerson 1994: 129–31, on which I am here partly relying. For consciousness, cf. p. 98, n. 7.

connectedness. It asks what explains unity through time, that is, what ensures that the perceiving and thinking subject of yesterday is the same as the one today. Is there anything in the 'I' that would be strictly identical at all times, regardless of how great the changes are which the person goes through?

2.1. FROM PROPRIOCEPTION TO SELF-AWARENESS

If the objects of perception are problematic in their being collections of properties, which the mind must be able to unify into meaningful whole entities, then this is no less true in the case of the human being himself. As a bodily thing, the embodied self is equally a collection of dispersed formations in matter. And the diffusiveness of our nature is evident not just when we look at ourselves in the mirror. Also our self-perceptions confirm us as bodily, extended entities with a complex structure. In its own way, our mental life, too, consists of parts: thoughts, feelings, etc. Yet our experience of them is unified: we know which actions concern our own body, we localise them correctly within the structure, and we recognise without any effort which thoughts belong to ourselves. The topic of this section concerns the way in which Plotinus attempts to account for the unity, the experience of ownness and the built-in self-reference of bodily experiences and rational thoughts.

My purpose is to inquire especially into those conscious experiences, or that awareness, that the self has of itself, which is non-conceptual and non-reflective. (Note that this calls for a distinction between reflexive and reflective. While both describe relations the subject or agent has towards himself, reflexive relation points to an immediacy, reflective relation to a mediated relation to oneself, both to be soon explicated in more detail.) For Plotinus, this group of experiences or states is divided into two different kinds. An awareness of one's bodily states presents, as we shall see, the first case of non-conceptual awareness: an immediate, pre-reflective but reflexive self-awareness. The second group consists of the supra-conceptual intuitive states of the soul involving intelligible objects or the One, which Plotinus believes are both higher than and primary to the ordinary mode of conceptual thinking. These states, too, are reflexive without being reflective. My main emphasis is on bodily self-awareness, which I will compare with a special kind of cognition, namely pure self-intellection, towards the end of the chapter. Juxtaposing the two kinds of states reveals interesting differences and similarities, which, in turn, may expose the ways in which Plotinus' philosophical thinking about self-awareness is different from that

of present philosophy, as well as the resemblance of some of his concerns to ours.

The issues I will be dealing with are the following: (1) immediacy – understood as the directness of the ways I can gain knowledge of my own states as opposed to those of others, for which I have to rely on behaviour and the reports they provide; (2) unity of the experiencing subject; and, finally, (3) ownness, i.e., what it is for an experience or state of the soul to be *mine*.

Bodily self-awareness

Immediacy

Plotinus rarely raises the question why it seems that I know the states of my own mind better than those of anyone else. However, he does seem to be taking for granted that one's relation to one's own experiences is significantly different from the relation one has to others' experiences. The directness or immediacy of one's experiences seems almost too self-evident to be questioned. For instance, Plotinus' account of pain reveals that although pain happens in the body and is therefore to an extent separate and foreign to the real me, to the rational soul, our consciousness of it resembles knowledge. Plotinus distinguishes the affection, *pathos*, in the body from the soul's awareness of it. He calls pain consciousness a *gnōsis*, a kind of knowledge or recognition (IV.4.18.10; 19.2, 27). This is not knowledge in the sense of Platonic *epistēmē*, or Plotinian Intellect's infallible cognition. Nonetheless, it is analogical to real knowledge in one sense: it is immediate. On Plotinus' view, the sensitive soul's ability to inform the commanding centre of the soul about the pain in the body is infallible. The soul can mistake the pain only in the sense that it can give it too much significance or attention, but there is no failure in the way the bodily state is reported to the soul itself. A soul's knowledge of the pain in the particular body it ensouls is in that sense immediate.[5]

In his studies on Neoplatonism,[6] Lloyd P. Gerson has drawn attention to the phenomenon he calls self-reflexivity. In his terminology, self-reflexivity is the mere capacity for cognising our own states without, as it were, interpreting them. It is contrasted with introspection. What differentiates self-reflexion from introspection is its infallibility or self-evidence. It is the cognition of one's states, only qualifiedly: it is not an intentional relation

[5] IV.4.19 *passim*. It is also authoritative, since it never occurs to Plotinus to say the same of the beliefs I have of other's experiences, but this aspect is not explicit.

[6] Gerson 1997a; 1997b.

between a subject and an object because in this case, the object, that is, the state, is not in the same sense separate from the subject. Gerson connects self-reflexion first and foremost to the Intellect's self-intellection (to which I will return at the end of this chapter, as well as in chapter 3.2), but assumes that Plotinus is on the trail of a more general phenomenon. And indeed, one might think that the general structure also holds for the awareness of, for example, pain. Self-awareness of one's pain is immediate and infallible in the self-reflexive sense, a mere feeling behind the expressive 'ouch', whereas introspective – or reflective – awareness of the pain already interprets it as something, conceptualises it as 'pain'. (Whether or not such a pure feeling can be differentiated from the conceptualised one within conceptualised mental functioning of adult human beings is another matter.)

One species of immediate states is a particular kind of self-awareness Plotinus calls *sunaisthēsis*. As the use of *aisthēsis* indicates, *sunaisthēsis* refers to a state of being 'awake to', perceiving or being aware of something. Plotinus was interested in different aspects of consciousness,[7] among which *sunaisthēsis* had a special role. In its most basic sense, *sunaisthēsis* refers to bodily[8] self-awareness: it can be said of an animal's awareness of its body qualified or moulded by an image of the soul, as distinct from a self-awareness which can cover the ability to grasp the higher intellectual principles, peculiar solely to human beings.[9] It is stated elsewhere that it is a perception or awareness of that which is *inside* us, and thus an awareness of what goes on inside the body.[10] Although *sunaisthēsis* is directed to the bodily realm, it is an activity of the soul, not of the body. Memory, sunaisthetic self-awareness and consciousness (*parakolouthēsis*) are, together with the abilities to combine and apprehend, given as standard cases of capacities

[7] It is a commonplace in research literature that Plotinus attempted to tackle the problem of different types of consciousness (e.g. I.4.9–10). The terminology he uses has received some attention. *Antilēpsis* would seem to refer to an apprehension which happens after *phantasia* has dealt with the object of sense or thought (IV.4.13.11–16). *Parakolouthein* means literally 'to follow along with', and at I.4.9.1–7 it is contrasted with a state in which one's awareness is in a sort of sleep, sunken by sickness or magic arts. On the one hand Plotinus is intrigued by consciousness of the embodied, perceiving self, and on the other hand by consciousness or self-awareness of a paradigmatic, inner 'I', the pure reason. Whereas the former discussions are closer to what we would now call consciousness – including perceptual consciousness of one's surroundings as well as a higher, second-order consciousness in which one is reflexively aware of one's conscious mental states – the latter inquiry focuses on the activity of thinking of a perfect thinker. Cf. Warren 1964; Schwyzer 1960; Smith 1978; Graeser 1974.

[8] That the term is often used in the bodily contexts, cf. Schwyzer 1960: 356.

[9] I.1.11.11–12.

[10] III.4.4.11. Note that unlike the passages to come, in this text Plotinus denies that the soul of the All has a *sunaisthēsis* like humans have. The emphasis ought to be on the word *like*. The soul of the All cannot have the moving, changing and suffering experiences that we have in our body. It is as complete and perfect as anything existing on that level can be, and therefore foreign to the kind of problems and experiences human bodies mostly deal with.

that belong to the soul.[11] An awareness or consciousness of certain constituents in oneself is necessary for bringing these constituents into activity.[12] *Sunaisthēsis* is an ability which somehow fulfils the existence of organs. The embodied soul is aware of its body and what goes on in it. Presumably, also pain in the body could be within this somatic self-perception, but the primary use for *sunaisthēsis* will turn out to be something more specific.

Let me now make a short digression to Stoicism. For the Stoics, *phantasia* is a place or point in which (1) the objects of sensations are 'revealed' to the perceiving subject. The appearing happens, in a sense, by illuminating the sensory objects to the subject. (2) The appearance reveals itself to itself.[13] This kind of function of 'being aware' is not confined to the five senses, but animals are also aware of themselves and their constitution. A text by Hierocles[14] suggests that for an animal to be, as we see happening all the time, able and motivated to care for itself, it must be aware of itself. This capacity is required by the empirically recognised self-love, or self-appropriation of animals (reflexive *oikeiōsis*). Furthermore, all perception is preceded by self-perception (*sunaisthēsis*), an awareness of the parts one has, and their own, appropriate functions.[15] Examples given by Hierocles are bodily in nature, like ears and horns, but the awareness that one has of them is accompanied by a kind of 'knowledge' or, rather, a direct awareness of how to use them and to which purpose.

[11] Some of them are said to be for the perfection of organs, others are potentialities that the soul brings to the body, yet others actualities (IV.3.26.45–50). The list of capacities does not, unfortunately, give any information about a possible connection or interplay between the abilities. What may unify them is that they are all something that the soul has as a self, separable from other selves. Here I am arguing this in the case of awareness; for memory, cf. IV.4.3.1–6.

[12] I.1.11.4–8. According to IV.8.8.9–11, a desire is only recognised by us if it is processed not just by the desiring faculty but also by discursive reason. Whether this means simply that it becomes available for the temporally discursive faculty or whether he thinks that being conscious of something always requires some sort of conceptualising, is a further question that cannot be discussed here.

[13] LS39 with comments, especially Aetius. To preserve unity, I have translated *phantasia* as appearance, rather than as impression like LS. Sometimes it seems appropriate to call the faculty of *phantasia* a faculty of representation. But the notion of representation is heavily loaded. For scholars of medieval philosophy as well as modern representational theories, it has precise meanings, sometimes connected to the idea that the representations formed in the mind, rather than the objects in the world, are thought's true objects. In the ancient model, and especially in the Aristotelian model, this is not the case. The mind grasps the very same forms as are in the world. (For perceptual realism in antiquity, see, e.g., Burnyeat 1982; Tuominen 2007; forthcoming.) I will therefore mostly avoid the term in the ancient context, although I do think it is possible to use it in a less specific way. It can simply signify a function of the soul to form images or conceptual representations of the sensible or intelligible objects, thus creating an intermediate step in between the subject of perception and thought and the object in the world.

[14] Hierocles, LS 57C–D (*Elements of Ethics* of which papyrus fragments survive).

[15] Inwood 1984; Long 1991. Cf. also his 1993. For the Chrysippan background as well as for self-perception and self-preservatory rather than hedonistic self-interest in Stoicism, cf. Inwood 1985: 190–4.

That *sunaisthēsis* is an awareness of only one's own body and parts may be disputed. If the following lines concerning the perceptual awareness of the world are combined with the immediate knowledge of one's bodily parts, the resulting awareness is not confined to one body and person. It would be, rather, an awareness that ties us to the world and our surroundings.[16] Although Hierocles' interest in the phenomenon is closely related to attempts to understand action and thereby one's relations to the outside world, and although he does discuss examples in which self-perception must be supplemented by perception of the outside world, like possible external threats, there is room to argue that *sunaisthēsis* itself is meant to capture a reflexive awareness rather than perception directed to the external world. Moreover, the sense in which Plotinus adopts the term does not seem to include things outside the agent itself. Since any detailed estimation of Hierocles' passage is beyond the scope of this book, I will concentrate on that interpretation. Unlike, for instance, Alexander of Aphrodisias, who uses the same term to refer to the unity of perceptual consciousness, what interests Plotinus and Hierocles is the immediate and pre-reflective consciousness of oneself in a body, an awareness that humans share with animals.[17] If the interpretation of the author of the anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus* is to be trusted, this kind of awareness is natural and irrational, that is, happens without reasoning (LS 57H 4). Once this awareness has fully developed in an animal, it functions automatically and without effort. It, too, is a kind of direct or immediate knowledge.

Unity

Even though *sunaisthēsis* does not unify different kinds of perceptions, the prefix *sun-* suggests that it does bring together something, and we have already seen that this something is connected to the body.

It is here that the Stoic origin of the term is most easily detectable and helps in revealing Plotinus' meaning. Hierocles (LS 57C) states that the first

[16] If I understood correctly, such a view was propounded by George Boys-Stones in a paper in Reykjavik, 2003.

[17] Aristotle used the term to denote perceiving goodness in oneself, but also in a very special sense, that is, when sensing or perceiving the world together with several people, with friends (*EN* 1170b5; *EE* 1245b19–25). In his commentary, Alexander of Aphrodisias seems to use it when he discusses the unity of perceptual consciousness (*in Arist. De sens*. 36,12; 163,12, commenting on 438b8; 449a5). Once, he acknowledges a more directly self-reflexive role (148,10, commenting on 448a22). In the only Plotinian text where *sunaisthēsis* is used in a context with different perceptions like hearing and seeing, it points to the way in which these work by and within themselves, not to the way in which they are brought together in the faculty of appearance (IV.5.5.30). For Soranus, the term denotes different kinds of *bodily* sensations or feelings (1.27; 49). Plutarch describes how members of the same community take care of each other and express this by punishing things done to others. They have a *sunaisthēsis* as if they were all 'parts of one [body]' (Plut. *Sol*. 18.5).

thing that animals perceive is their own parts, both that they have them and for what purpose they have them. 'Therefore the first proof of every animal's perceiving itself is its awareness of its parts and the functions for which they are given.' As Hierocles says, when we want to see something, we strain our eyes, not our ears towards the visible object. Self-perception, Anthony Long adds, involves also comparative assessment. Animals' behaviour and appropriate use of their body informs us that they are sometimes aware which parts of their body are relatively weaker and which stronger, that is, whether some parts are to be protected and some others more suitable for use in demanding situations. This awareness of a structured body with certain functions, strengths and weaknesses precedes all other kinds of appearances. Pain could therefore be included, in so far as it is localised by the soul in a certain part of the body and within the circle of sunaisthetic awareness that informs the soul of the whole bodily organisation and its state.

Plotinus does not make explicit the body's structure and the differentiated functions of its parts in those contexts where *sunaisthēsis* signifies a self-awareness of human or animal individuals. Similarity with the Stoic notion is strengthened, however, by Plotinus' use of it in the context of a very special kind of ordered whole, the ordered universe, 'the All'. What he does make explicit, though, is that what he is concerned with is the same kind of self-awareness which humans have.[18] Let me therefore dwell on this peculiar metaphysical entity for a while, as an example of the kind of awareness we are interested in.

The universe, that is, the All, is both harmonious and unified. In that unity everything is connected to everything in an orderly way, one part's movements affecting others in accordance with rational forming principles.[19] As a living being in the terms of the *Timaeus*, the All is often likened to ordinary living beings,[20] and moreover, the All is depicted as an ordered whole with functionally differentiated parts:

> As each thing in the All is in nature and disposition, so it contributes to the completeness of the All, and is affected and acts, just as in each living thing each of the parts, as it is in nature and constitution, thus contributes to the whole, and promotes the whole and is fit for arrangement and use; it [each part] gives things from itself and receives from others, as much as its nature is fit for receiving; and it has, as it were, a self-awareness of everything with respect to everything. (IV.4.45.2–8)

[18] 'Just as we are aware of ourselves', IV.4.24.21. The All is different from us, among other things, in that it does not have sense organs, or ordinary perceptions.

[19] IV.4.31–3, esp. at 33.1–7.

[20] For instance, Plotinus claims that the All as a unity has a shared experience like living beings in which the parts, even the ones which are not spatially connected to each other, can share experiences (IV.4.32.14–26). This is another Stoic idea that Plotinus borrows.

A whole is something with differentiated parts appropriate to different functions. These parts have their proper place in the overall arrangement of the whole. Were one to find examples of such parts and functions, Hierocles' horns, eyes and ears come readily to mind. Plotinus' use of 'living beings' as an analogy denotes that he has something similar in mind.

But what is the function and status of the *sunaisthēsis* in the All? According to the text above, it is an important feature of the All, and a self-perception of everything with respect to everything. At the end of the treatise (45.33–45) Plotinus again compares the All to an animal, claiming that in a small living being the changes of parts and the self-perceptions of them are small, whereas in the All they are large and can concern independent living beings within the All. The 'considerable changes in the All' refers both to the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies and to the changes in the characters of souls, in their place and ranking in the universe. As I understand it, the point must be this: both the All and any individual living being have a body with its own structure. This structure is not at rest but moves in certain orderly ways, so that the parts of it change their positions and internal relations. Self-perception is connected to these internal changes. It is an awareness of both the parts and the changes. The soul of the All has a synoptic *sunaisthēsis* of the universe, whereas the individual souls have a *sunaisthēsis* only of the particular part they ensoul, their own body.[21]

In sum, *sunaisthēsis* is what enables us to choose eyes when we need to see, and use our hands when that seems appropriate, and in general helps us in controlling our body and those functions of its organs which are not completely automatic, unlike, for instance, digestion. An important part of functioning in a body is an awareness of oneself in that body, a feeling or perception that its fine structure is our own, ours to use. This 'knowing how and when' to use certain suitable parts of our bodies would not be possible without some sort of awareness of the whole and the structure of functionally differentiated parts. It helps us in finding the proper function of our bodily parts and senses. It connects the soul with, or, rather, *to* the body which is a structured whole-of-parts. This is also what Plotinus meant above by the 'perfection of organs'.[22] One has to be, so to speak, reflexively

[21] From the *sunaisthēsis* of the All it does not follow, as Liddell–Scott seems to imply, that everything in the All would be 'sunaisthetically' aware of everything. It is a self-reflexive awareness of only one embodied soul, be that of the soul of the All or that of any other individual soul (IV.4.24.21–2).

[22] The spirit of this suggestion is Aristotelian: a finger can be really said to be a finger only if it is attached to a living organism with proper functions of different parts, capable of fulfilling those functions. Plotinus claims, together with the Stoics, that for a human being and for many animals, an important part of both being alive *and* functioning is that one *is aware* of the whole and the functions of its parts.

awake to them and to their movements, otherwise the body's fine-tuned structure would be useless.

Note two further things: first, since the *sunaisthēsis* in the universe encompasses the universe in its entirety, the self-awareness in question cannot be directed outside the entity. It cannot explain the entity's relations to an external world. For the All, there is nothing external, and the similarities of Plotinus' and Long's understanding of *sunaisthēsis* as internal to one body are thus enforced. Second, Plotinus makes explicit something discussed in modern philosophy[23] but not by Hierocles: not only has the body a structure, but it also moves, and thus changes the internal relations of its limbs, for example. The agent has an immediate, non-reflective awareness of the movements. It just 'knows'. The present terminology of proprioception[24] or somatic sense of the self seems therefore all the more appropriate.

Ownness

It should still be pointed out that it is a different thing to recognise, for instance, one's bodily states, and to recognise them as one's own. In self-awareness, what a person is aware of is neither an object conceptualised or reflected as 'mine' nor an external object foreign to the embodied self, but the body which belongs to that person in a quite special way. The immediacy only applies to things close enough to the perceiving subject, under, as it were, its own jurisdiction. As we saw in the case of the All and other living beings, *sunaisthēsis* is used in cases where there is a perception or awareness by an entity of things embraced by the same entity, that is, things that are inside the same entity, be that a human body or the whole universe. But how exactly does Plotinus draw the line between inside and outside? And what is it that makes some of the experiences mine, internal to me, in this immediate and non-reflected sense?

First, Plotinus contrasts sight as being of something external with self-awareness as being of something which is 'perceived' inside or within oneself, without any medium (V.8.11.21–4). Even when perceived, sunsets, chairs, melodies and the like retain their link to the realm of 'outside'. So far, one's body, as well as its pains, pleasures and movements, could be considered as belonging more firmly to the category of 'inside'. They are within the immediate awareness of one's own body.

[23] For different dilemmas about the body in modern philosophy, cf. Bermúdez, Marcel and Eilan 1995: esp. p. 15.

[24] Long 1993.

For the Stoics, who connected *sunaisthēsis* directly to *phantasia*, ownness could be based on something more specific than the location in one material body. The appearances of a self-aware subject could belong just to him/her because regardless of whether several subjects perceive or think the same objects, the appearances they form of the objects belong always to only one subject.[25] Furthermore, the appearances two different faculties of *phantasia* have of the same object could have qualitatively different properties, inaccessible to anyone else. Although this is not very emphatic in the sources, it seems important for the possibility of different reactions to the very same perceived events.[26] In Plotinus, perceptions are completed by the faculty of appearance which usually gives them its own interpretation, thus yielding the final informational content of a sensation.[27] The perception is thus connected with the emotive and doxastic environment of the person perceiving it, that is, joined to the dispositional background as well as to the set of beliefs the person already holds.

If pressed, both the Stoics and Plotinus might well have conceded that the phenomenal qualities of different persons' experiences may differ. But this is not the primary manner in which Plotinus thinks about the issue. Being a particular soul ensouling one identifiable body yields a metaphysical localisation for what is internal and what external to that person. The fact that my appearances happen within my faculty of appearance does render them mine even when someone else would have an appearance that had all the same properties as the one I have. The only property different is that this appearance is given as mine by my *phantasia*. Even if the privately accessible feature were ruled out, there are different ways *phantasia* could be responsible for individuation of appearances. It is possible, although not explicit, that Plotinus, following Plato's *Timaeus* (71b–e), believes *phantasia* to reside in the liver. At least the desiring aspect of the soul is located in the liver, and elsewhere emotions or affections (*pathē*) are connected with the images formed in the *phantasia*.[28] If the liver was the place or mirror where all individual appearances took place, and since each person's faculty of appearance is literally located in one and just one location within the

[25] On representation and Stoicism, cf. Long 1991.

[26] At least experts perceive things differently from non-experts. Diog. Laert. 7.51; Cic. *Acad.* 2.20. I am grateful to Håvard Lökke for these references. Cf. Remes forthcoming b.

[27] IV.3.29.19–26; Emilsson 1988: 107–12. In section 2.2, I will argue for the significance of memory, i.e. the retention of *phantasiai*, and in chapter 3.1 for the structures of the discursive reason forms of these.

[28] For the connection with liver: IV.3.19.20; 4.28.15–17; for emotions and *phantasia*: I.2.5.18–21; IV.3.32.1–6.

universe, it would thus yield them an individual space–time location. Although this is certainly the case, I am doubtful whether this location would be of primary importance for Plotinus. In addition to his never appealing to it, for a Neoplatonist, taking the spatio-temporal location as primary in the individuation of persons would amount to getting things upside down. What makes a liver a determinate thing as well as a functioning liver and a seat of bodily wants and desires is the soul. The soul endows it, in different ways, with everything that makes it one and alive. The self and the other are distinct bodily entities, but this distinctiveness, as we have seen, is also due to the formal power of the soul.

Self-awareness underlines the bodily boundary between self and other endowed, ultimately, by the soul. It concerns those and only those bodily parts and 'goings on' which happen in this one body, my body. We can have no similar awareness of others' bodies, nor of any other external things, since the awareness functions in that particular composite of soul and body, presenting as mine all the experiences that fall within its activity. It may well be that we encounter sunaisthetic awareness only in determinate organic bodies, but this awareness is not reducible or even supervenient on any of the body's physical features. It is a power endowed to it by the soul, which makes it a living, conscious and unified entity.

Towards paradigmatic self-awareness

We have seen Plotinus use, as seems very likely, the Stoic terminology of his day, and either Hierocles' or some other Stoic philosopher's philosophical conception of bodily self-perception. It seems, however, that he adopted his antagonists' ideas not without qualms. Plotinus is also expressing doubts. His way of thinking and talking about what is internal and what is external to myself is first and foremost Platonic, although Stoicism shares some of the same features.

Quite apart from the theme of self-awareness, it could be observed that there are several reasons why Plotinus would not have been happy with the discussion so far. If one accepts his most extreme views of true self, namely, that the core is pure reason, rather than the perishable union of soul and body, then much of what is bodily falls in the category of 'outside', too. All evils, for example, have their origin in what is outside. Following the *Timaeus*, Plotinus places the source of pains and illnesses in the outside realm. The bodily goings on that are experienced as deviations from the peaceful, normal state may be felt by our souls and in our own bodies, but

they are caused by things outside us. He argues that the soul must remain unaffected when it is aware of a pain that is *in* the body, not the soul.[29]

Moreover, Plotinus advocates a kind of separation from the body even during the soul's embodied phase (more closely discussed in chapter 4). According to such a scheme, purification involves getting rid of all emotions, or at least preserving only those bodily needs and pleasures which are necessary for the maintenance and functioning of the human being. If one could disregard one's body altogether, nothing of any value would be lost.[30] Understood in this way, also pleasurable experiences should be regarded as foreign to one's true self. Strictly speaking, then, all that concerns the body could be regarded as being 'outside'. Not only is reason the centre of a bodily self, as the Stoics would seem to hold (LS 57G 2), but it alone is the self. Even one's own body can be externalised, regarded as foreign to oneself. Since for the Stoics, one might argue, the soul, too, is bodily in nature, the distinction between internal and external cannot simply follow the line between bodily and non-bodily. Although the Stoic tradition includes a trait which treats as external everything in conflict or separate from reason,[31] their understanding of the universe and its bodily nature may alleviate the polarisation between bodily and non-bodily, and in any case what is preserved of their discussion on self-awareness does not grow to an explicit theory of non-bodily self-awareness.

It is evident from the following passage that Plotinus considers refinements to the bodily notion of self, which he sees as too wide and too vague.

> We could say at once that its [soul's] perceptive faculty is [perceptive] only of what is external; for even if there is an awareness of the happenings inside the body, yet even here the apprehension is of something which is outside it; for it perceives the experiences in the body by itself, but the reasoning faculty in it [= the soul] makes the judgement based on the appearances provided by the perceptive faculty, and combines and divides [them]. (V.3.2.2–9)

First, the distinction me-inside/all-the-rest-outside is complemented by the idea that not just a soul or the composite of soul and body, but also faculties or parts of the soul have things internal and external to them. Second,

[29] IV.4.19.12–29. The conception of pain itself is different in Plato. For the source of pains see *Ti.* 43a–c; IV.4.24.23–5: something differing from the permanent state is apprehended as coming from outside; V.8.11.27–31: illnesses are alien to us.

[30] Plotinus' view of the body is not quite that grim in all passages. He compares, e.g., bodies to beautiful, functional houses (II.9.18; IV.3.9.29–34; 4.18.10–13).

[31] E.g. Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 4.5.6–7; 6.36. That this trait may be traced back to Chrysippus was brought to my attention by Håvard Løkke. For the later Stoics, esp. Epictetus, cf. chapter 4.2.

Plotinus is advancing an argument about self-knowledge. He thinks that even if the perceptive faculty has an immediate awareness of the whole of the body, this will not qualify as true self-knowledge, for two reasons. The bodily goings on are in the body, outside the perceptive faculty. The relation is not internal to any one subject. It is not perfectly direct and therefore not proper knowledge. Similarly, before the images that come through perception are apprehended in any way by the soul, they are further processed by another faculty, reason.[32] The judgements made, based on perceptions, are made once again outside the perceptive faculty.

Bodily *sunaisthēsis*, Plotinus claims, may be reflexive with respect to the perceiving and the appearing embodied self, and it may look as if it were a kind of direct knowing of one's body and its movements. But at least in the case of human beings, this is not the highest form of self-reflexivity. What the perceptive faculty perceives is actually the body which is outside it. The perceptive faculty itself is only a part of the embodied soul. In an ideal case, self-awareness would be internal to a more basic entity than the composite of soul and body. This would render its functioning ideally autonomous and self-sufficient.

This brings us to self-intellection, the activity of the highest part of us, *nous*. True, ideal knowledge and intellection (to be discussed in chapter 3) is thought of internal objects, that is to say, the Platonic forms themselves within the mind. This is contemplation without any intermediary, 'through itself' which no longer needs appearances or representations of any kind,[33] and has, thus, at least one similarity with bodily self-awareness. The immediate knowledge of the internalised forms by the *nous* is associated with the self-reflexive awareness of the activity of thinking of the forms. *Nous* is completely and directly aware both of its objects *and* of its activity of thought. Paradigmatic self-reflexivity is the self-reflexivity of that inner self, pure intellectual capacity. It is described by L. P. Gerson as 'a self-evidential cognitive state wherein the recognition by a cognitive agent that a cognitive activity is occurring in it is the sole and sufficient evidence for the claim that the cognitive activity is occurring'.[34] The activity is transparent unto itself, and the knowledge of it infallible.

In this case, too, self-awareness enforces the line between the self and the other, between what is internal to me and what remains outside. It is

[32] Cf. IV.3.3.21–31.

[33] Esp. V.3.5.25–8; 8.20–1; 8.11.21–2. As Socrates says in the *Phaedo*, when the soul investigates by itself, it can pass into a realm of what is pure, immortal and unchanging, whereas investigation through body leads to what is never the same. *Phd*. 79c–d. Cf. *Resp*. 508d.

[34] Gerson 1997b: 162.

just that here the line separating the internal from the external is much stricter: internal are only those things identical to my noetic capacity, and everything else is external. Taken in this strictest sense, internal is only the wholly autonomous and independent functioning of the *nous*.

It has rightly been pointed out by several scholars that the self-reflexive state of the Intellect does differ significantly from any other self-awareness.[35] The Intellect is not thinking about anything beyond itself, that is, its state is not intentional in the sense of having an object separate from itself.[36] As we shall see in chapter 4, the relation of subject and object is that of identity which guarantees the infallibility. As it is both the activity of thinking and the objects of thought, in knowing or being aware of them, self-intellection yields also complete self-knowledge, whereas bodily self-awareness does not give us an exhaustive picture of the self, or even of our body.[37]

However, regardless of revisions, something special of the original meaning of *sunaisthēsis* has been preserved in the context of self-intellection. It is a reflexive awareness of a structured *whole*. Plotinus claims that even in paradigmatic thought there is something that needs to be unified. Unlike what is paradigmatically one, what is many needs and wishes to be conscious of itself because this makes it a whole. 'The multiple might seek itself and wish to converge on and be aware of itself' (V.6.5.1–2). *Sunaisthēsis* is connected to the idea of converging or inclining to a point, to one space, or, in a more abstract sense, as attaining an agreement – in all senses, of many coming closer to a unity.

The Intellect, it is claimed, is one of the things that have to behave in this way in order to reach unity. It is not paradigmatically simple and self-sufficient like the One, but many, consisting of parts. As we shall later see in more detail, every intellect is two, inasmuch as it can be conceptually divided into the thinker and the things thought. In this way already, it is not paradigmatically self-sufficient, because it depends on both of these parts (V.4.1.10–15; 20–1). Moreover, it is identical to its objects of thought which are internal to it. It is also the forms it contains, and therefore a multiplicity which needs to constitute a whole by some means. Plotinus' claim is that the activity of self-thinking will somehow bring the intellect closer to unity and self-sufficiency. The way in which this happens is described in the following manner:

[35] For recent accounts, cf. Rappe 1997; Gerson 1997a; b.

[36] Rappe 1997: 441–2.

[37] See II.9.1.50 ff. Cf. Arist. *Met.* 1072b19–24; 1074b15–75a10; Gerson 1997b; 1997a: esp. pp. 9 and 16; Crystal 1998. I will argue for these claims in chapter 3.2.

that which is deficient in relation to itself has reached self-sufficiency by being a whole, with a sufficiency deriving from all [the parts], being with itself and inclining towards itself. For self-awareness (*sunaisthēsis*) is a perception of something which is many: even the name bears witness to this. (V.3.13.19–22)

Note that the claims about *sunaisthēsis* being a unifying awareness of something many sound quite general. Whatever the context, as the name indicates, this kind of awareness is of something which is many.[38] *Sunaisthēsis* is a step – or many steps – on the way from something that is dispersed and has no awareness, that cannot be a properly functioning whole, to a unified, self-conscious agent capable of autonomous functioning. Its structure is the same regardless of the objects it unifies into one subjectivity. In that sense, *pure* subjectivity is an objectless feature.

In the context of ideal thought, unity is attainable by self-reflexive thinking, being and inclining – by being wholly directed to oneself. This, Plotinus claims, involves *an awareness* of the multiplicity. And not only as multiplicity, but as a whole. *Sunaisthēsis* is an awareness of a whole, some one and the same thing which the many have become.[39] The significance of this awareness lies in the fact that it collects the objects to unity under some one subject, one conscious thinker. There is a single unitary centre of awareness, and at that centre the multiplicity is apprehended in a unitary way. Sunaisthetic self-awareness unites soul to body just as it unites the subject of thinking to his collection of internalised objects of knowledge. By having this awareness, the moving and acting as well as the thinking self experiences itself as one agent and subject.

Plotinus shares the common intuition that people have a different relation to what is within oneself or inside one's mind, in contrast to things outside. He assumes a certain directness of several experiences and acts of the soul. He construes, as we have seen, two different stages of this. The soul may

[38] Plotinus does use the term a couple of times for something that is one and not many, namely the One itself. As always when talking about the absolute and ineffable unity, he qualifies his use with a *hoion* questioning whether what is absolutely simple would have any kind of awareness or perception, or, even more improbably, a kind of awareness of oneself in a body. In this case, the notion of 'self-awareness' starts already to live its own life separate from any explicit references to the bodily, but it may still carry the kind of associations it carries elsewhere. Since the One is, in some sense, the principle of existence of everything that is, in some qualified sense everything is internal to it. It is an absolute unity with complete self-sufficiency. Were it to have any kind of awareness, it would be reflexive self-awareness. But why and how would something absolutely simple have any sensation? As something intelligible and a source of life, existence, etc., Plotinus' One must somehow be actual and alive as well. It is not, for instance, *anaisthēton* (e.g. V.4.2.15). For the spiritual senses, see Dillon 1986.

[39] V.3.13.12–22.

have direct, self-evidential, and pre-reflective information about bodily experiences. In the process of incorporating the originally Stoic notion '*sunaisthēsis*' into the (neo)Platonic framework Plotinus dematerialises the term and revises it in significant ways. Where the self and its relation to the bodily organism may be a Stoic interest, Plotinus' main focus is in the self *qua* cognitive capacities. Self-awareness of a whole with functionally differentiated parts is not characteristic only of somatic self-awareness, but belongs essentially even to the ideal contemplation of forms. Intellect's self-evidential knowledge of the forms is a direct, immediate self-awareness of its acts and contents, but it differs from bodily self-awareness by being an epistemically indubitable activity.[40]

In all cases, *sunaisthēsis* concerns the realm of *me*, the realm of 'inside', 'within', collecting it, as it were, under one consciousness, separable from other such unities.[41] In contrast to modern discussions, the significance of objects which are within oneself does not lie in their uniqueness or in any privately accessible features. The point, as the talk of 'inside/outside' already suggests, is local and metaphysical rather than about epistemological privacy or phenomenal features.[42] Being conscious of things within myself is special because they are 'in me', within the circle of my soul, my awareness, unlike things which are outside, or, for instance, 'in you'. Even though Plotinus is not very interested in considering what relation my appearances or thoughts have to yours, he is preoccupied with the question as to what makes my appearances and thoughts mine. With perhaps both an awkward terminology and metaphysics, he attempts to explicate both what makes a particular body truly mine and a certain first-personal mode of presentation of conscious acts and experiences, that is, the phenomenon that I immediately experience my mental states as mine.

2.2. MENTAL CONNECTEDNESS

We have seen how self-awareness unifies an extended body with differentiated parts into an embodied subject with co-ordinated movements and

[40] Although Rorty 1980 is too hasty to dismiss ancient epistemology just as 'grasping universals', his point about the change from the ancient distinction indubitable-reason/dubitable-sensations to the early modern indubitable-mind/dubitable-physical carries weight. Cf. chapter 3. For the capacity of self-evidential, non-conceptual or non-interpreted awareness of one's own states in Plotinus, highlighted by the ideal case of self-thinking *nous*, see Gerson 1997a; 1997b.

[41] That the term *sunaisthēsis* carries the associations of unity and self-reflexivity, that Plotinus uses it in the contexts of different hypostases, or that it has a Stoic background, are not entirely new ideas. Esp. Schwyzer 1960: 354–6; cf. Bussanich 1988: 24–5; Graeser 1972: 126–37; Hadot 1968: 237; 289. Why I do not think, like Schwyzer 1960, that the Aristotelian background is the most significant, has hopefully become evident in the course of the chapter.

[42] I am indebted to M. M. McCabe for putting it in terms of 'local'.

a sense that its parts belong to itself, that is, into one unity. It is also a feature of a pure rational subject, an intellect. Its manifold internal objects are unified by this awareness into one self-conscious subject. So far, the approach has been confined to clear-cut entities like the ensouled body or the intellect, and vertical or synchronic in nature: self-awareness explains the unity of a complex structure at any one time. This section moves on to inquire into personal identity. The first part outlines the significance that memory has for the temporal self, the second takes – through a case study on awareness of one's happiness – the problem of double-selfhood to an extreme and shows that within the 'double-decker' there is, nonetheless, a strictly identical core.

Memory and consciousness

In a film called *Memento*, the main character has a curious neurological impairment: at regular intervals, all his memories are wiped from his mind. He finds himself in a place and situation he has no knowledge of, and has to start, each time, from scratch.[43] Otherwise, he is fit, capable of action, and smart. From the responses of his environment, he can gather indications of his condition, which he then attempts to mitigate by taking pictures of people and places and by writing down the most significant information on them. Since he has not much time before the next wipe-out, the information he can thus transmit to his future 'self' remains helplessly patchy and unrelated, and the drama consists, among other things, of the misunderstandings his own system leads him to.

An embodied Plotinian self seems, initially, in an even worse situation than the leading character of the film. His existence seems to consist of a series of momentary selves. Each momentary self has sunaisthetic awareness of itself as a unity, but so far there is no idea of what kind of psychological capacities tie these selves to one unified stream of consciousness. For a temporal self, a unified self-awareness is not much help if it does not have some continuity in time. John Locke, famously, demanded that identity must be constituted by memory, by unity of consciousness of present and past actions.[44] This kind of consciousness creates a mental connectedness between the past, present and future moments of my self.

Plotinus treats memory in several successive chapters of the two treatises *On the Difficulties about the Soul* (IV.3 and 4). Unfortunately, he claims

[43] Neurological problems very much like his are attested in research literature by, for example, the famous neurologist and author Oliver Sacks.

[44] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 27.16. I will not here discuss the problems connected with this idea.

to have dealt elsewhere with the nature of memory, and concentrates in these chapters on the question concerning what kind of things have memory.[45] Something of the nature and significance of this ability is conveyed, however. What is evident is that memory is one of those things that guard human subjects from the flux threatening them on the ontological level of bodies:

> Some things, those that come through the body, end in the soul, and others belong to the soul alone, if the soul must be something, and have some distinct nature, and a work of its own. If this is so, it will have aspiration, and memory of its aspiration and of reaching or not reaching it, since its nature is not one of the things in a state of flux (*hē phusis autēs ou tōn rheontōn*). For if this is not so, we shall not grant it self-awareness (*sunaisthēsis*) or consciousness (*parakolouthēsis*) or any capacity to combine (*sunthesis*) and to apprehend (*sunesis*). . . . since it [memory] is of a staying kind, it is necessary that the moving and flowing nature of the body is the reason of forgetfulness, not of memory. (IV.3.26.40–6; 52–4)

Memory is connected with the soul. It is not a feature of the bodily things, of ever-changing collections of spatio-temporal parts, but of a soul capable of stability, consciousness and self-awareness. Without memory, the self-awareness and consciousness of the embodied subject would be impaired, and he would not be capable of rationality. The possibilities of making combinations, drawing inferences, etc., all require that one retains information – or appearances or propositions – through time.

The faculty responsible for memory is *phantasia*. Memories are either appearances of past sense perceptions or, in the case of thoughts, retained verbal expressions of rational acts.[46] In general, *phantasia* – and its retention – is a further, non-necessary stage of perception. Plotinus explains how we do not remember everything we perceive, how insignificant details of what we perceive do not necessarily enter the faculty of appearance when the soul is primarily engaged in other things. At any given time, one can attend only to a small proportion of sensible stimuli. From the very start the soul winnows these stimuli. Plotinus distinguishes, further, two ways of not storing useless perceptions. Either perceptions are not processed by the faculty of appearance at all, or they are, but are nonetheless not preserved:

[45] IV.3.25.8–10. It is unclear what he refers to. Other treatises' discussions on memory seem either dependent upon this one or at least not much more helpful. For memory in Plotinus, cf. Gerson 1994: 180–4.

[46] IV.3.29.31–2; 30.1–13. A central exposition on memory in antiquity was Aristotle's treatise *On Memory and Recollection*. This work includes the idea that memory is connected to *phantasia* (450a). Plotinus' view may also be reminiscent of the Stoic one: Plut. *Mor. De soll. an.* 961c; *Comm. not.* 1085a–b.

> The things which happen altogether incidentally do not necessarily happen in the faculty of appearance (*phantasia*) [at all], and even if they did happen, they would not necessarily be there in such a way that it would guard and observe them, but the impression (*tupos*) of a thing like this [i.e., an insignificant thing] would not yield an awareness (*sunaisthēsis*). (IV.4.8.17–20, cf. also the beginning of IV.4.8)

After perception has occurred, unless it is altogether incidental and insignificant, the faculty of appearance gives the perception a mode, an appearance (or an image?), thus completing the perception and resulting in a final informational content of the whole process of perceiving. The text suggests, however, that this may or may not be followed by another stage, in which the mind-picture is 'preserved and observed'. This latter stage is described as that which yields a *sunaisthēsis*. We have thus yet another occurrence of the term encountered in the previous section.

Several options for an explicit interpretation lie open. Either *sunaisthēsis* is both the preserving and observing, or either the preserving *or* the observing – or neither of them, but a prerequisite or result of these. That the preservation and observation in question must mean something different from ordinary remembering and reflecting on what one remembers, at least seems evident. As Plotinus' general interest in the chapter is to make the distinction, on the one hand, between what is salient and remembered and, on the other, what is insignificant and what we are not aware of, the observation in question is not likely to be later reflecting of memory-images preserved, but a more initial directing of conscious attention to certain appearing perceptions.

Holding an appearance so as to make it available for future inspections requires something more than perceiving it, or even that it should appear fleetingly in one's mind. It requires, Plotinus argues, that one has noticed it, that one gives attention to it. One directs attention to the things that matter somehow, that have significance – not to the opposite of these (IV.4.8.9–12; cf. 24–7). As examples Plotinus mentions that we pay attention to milestones because we are not able to reach our destination simply through air somehow, but are compelled to make our way step by step. Also, if someone does something repeatedly for long enough, he no longer observes the details of what he is doing (lines 33–4). Memory relies on or includes as the first stage a voluntary element,[47] an ability to appropriate what is remembered, to select what is meaningful and salient for oneself in the given multitude of appearing perceptions. There seem to be two stages of this conscious attention. At the first stage, only some perceptions form

[47] Cf. Smith 1978: 298.

appearances in *phantasia*, thus becoming available within consciousness; at the second, the subject guards and observes them (lines 16–21). We are properly aware only of things to which some attention is directed, and only the latter will be preserved.[48] It seems that this does not mean that the soul would only remember things that one reflectively concentrates upon. Details are such that they are included in the whole, even when one no longer concentrates on them (lines 30–3).

At first it looks as if Plotinus, in the context of memory, is using *sunaisthēsis* in a completely different way from his use of it in the context of self-awareness. Here, it has to do with conscious, awakened and directed awareness of some chosen things which come from outside, and no longer a direct, perhaps non-conceptual but certainly non-reflected perception of one's body. Strictly speaking, however, the differences are not that great. Even though the former kind of awareness is more like perceptual consciousness than pre-conceptual proprioception, it is still an awareness which, once developed, can function without second-order directing of attention to the directing itself. When perceiving our environment and acting in it, we rarely say to ourselves: 'now here is what I see, and this part of it is salient, so this is what I shall keep in mind, and the rest shall be forgotten.'[49] It is not something we *need* to reflect on. Second, as has already been mentioned, the objects of the faculty of appearance are the already internalised perceptions, not the external objects themselves. The activity may not be internal in any ideal way – so as to yield infallible knowledge – but it is still internal, in so far as the perceptive faculty has dealt with external things, and whoever is now 'observing and preserving' has the already internalised objects ready to hand for his use. This means that the activity is also self-reflexive, if the self is taken broadly to mean the unity of all faculties of the soul.

Moreover, here, too, *sunaisthēsis* is an awareness of a whole. As the examples above show, Plotinus does not think that the kind of directing of attention that he is here concerned with would primarily be a matter of inspecting details one after the other. On the contrary, the details are usually ignored. Once reason has formed unto itself a proper picture of the whole of parts, it does not attend to (*prosechō*) the details but comprehends, rather, the whole that is being done (lines 30–2). Appropriating what is salient is

[48] In this, I will focus mostly on the personal intentions and characteristics influencing this attention. In chapter 3.1 we shall encounter those powers of the soul that ensure that what is understood as salient is not merely individually pleasing and arbitrary, but also coincides with recurring and essential structures of the universe.

[49] Unless there is something very special going on, something that we start reflecting on more accurately.

primarily a matter of seeing a whole, of understanding the significance of different things *in comparison and relation* to other things. It is like looking at a pointillist painting. If you stand too close, you may mistake the images as consisting of just a lot of dots with bright colours and interesting shapes, but nothing else. Only from a distance, do you first see that a picture emerges. This may be followed by the realisation that it is a picture that resembles something you have seen before, which means something to you.

This brings me to the other important feature of this ability. There is a pre-existing collection of things that we remember. There is, as it were, a collection of beliefs that we already hold. Of these beliefs, most are presently non-occurrent in our surface consciousness, and of these some are such that we have thought of them at least once and could perhaps remember doing so if questioned (in Vlastos' terminology 'overt'), others merely entailed by other beliefs held ('covert').[50] The new things that we perceive and direct attention to, if internalised, will be incorporated into this complex collection. Even a vision of the salient whole that is being perceived is not enough by itself, but to be meaningful and remembered, it must connect to an already developed, albeit not necessarily explicit, view of what in it might be of significance for me, for my memories, interests, purposes and intentions, that is, for me to attain things by my actions. By referring to the things that *matter* for the perceiving subject, Plotinus refers to an understanding of the overall saliency of the thing being perceived or done *for the agent*.[51]

The appearance of a perception that merits the name *sunaisthēsis* here is one in which choices have been made with respect to what is salient and what not, based both on an understanding of the perceived thing as a whole, and in the context of that agent's beliefs and intentions. Remember, how in the case of bodily self-awareness, an awareness of structure and appropriateness of differentiated parts was involved, as was the capacity to compare. Similarly now, as the appearance is given a place and significance with respect to the whole, it becomes an object for self-awareness, and thereby available to memory too. An appearance, in this manner, does not

[50] Socratic *elenchus* is based on uncovering both kinds of beliefs and their relations; Vlastos 1983.

[51] This need not exclude noticing and learning new things. One reason to direct attention to something is precisely the fact that it is something startlingly unfamiliar, the significance of which one does not immediately know. This recognition occurs, too, in relation to memories and beliefs one already has.

Aquila 1992 suggests that for both Sartre and Plotinus a certain kind of self-consciousness is found within ordinary first-order consciousness, that the world itself exhibits a special sort of perceptible orientation or structure.

merely happen in a stream of consciousness but is properly incorporated into its continuation.

Note also that Plotinus keeps talking about some 'it' who does the observing. We are not only partially distinct from our bodies and perceptions, but some 'I' can also be distinguished from the things that appear in the mind. As *sunaisthēsis* is not a faculty, but the awareness of a selected set, who is responsible for the selective observation performed? Who is the detached observer? Who will have *sunaisthēsis*? Later philosophers, Philoponus tells us, postulated a further faculty, the attentive faculty of the soul (*prosektikon*; commenting on Arist. *De an*. 425b12). This faculty superintends what happens in a human being, and it was understood as a subfaculty of reason.

Even though Plotinus above, in IV.4.8, uses the verb 'to attend' (*prosechō*) in describing the directing of attention, he does not posit a different faculty of attention. He often refers simply to soul without making explicit which faculty or ability might be at work. That the faculty of appearance has some role was clearly indicated in the text. It could be responsible for such elements as desires (IV.3.32.4–5), which may affect the choices made. But Plotinus' reference above, to reason's capacity to apprehend what is perceived as a whole, suggests that he may have thought that reason is also involved more often than not. Elsewhere he does argue that it is reason which recognises the objects of perceptions, compares them to memories, and is capable of analysing them into parts.[52] This does not need to mean expressed propositions, but silent cognitive abilities like distinguishing entities and groups, comparing etc.[53] The exact roles of perception, appearance and reason in gaining perceptual information remain obscure.

If the above picture is right, a memory is produced as a result of a complex interplay between perception, appearance and (usually) non-reflective selecting and evaluating. The objects of the awareness are a set that has gone through a preliminary process of directing attention and selecting. *Sunaisthēsis* refers to the state where this initial selection has been performed, and the appearance included in the set of appearances the subject is aware of and able to recall at a later date. Note also that there is a subject of observation 'over and above' the observations themselves. The observer who makes choices about saliency is detached from the objects – he has a critical stance toward them. There is an inner realm in which appearances appear to someone who either does or does not direct attention to them. The objects are not simply forced upon the subject, but there occurs an

[52] V.3.3.1–6; Cf. pp. 144–5. [53] Distinguishing and collecting are the topic of chapter 3.1.

initial assenting to some of the appearances.[54] The formation of a set of memories of conscious experiences depends both on the perceptions that one happens to attain in particular circumstances, and on the way in which attention is directed to these perceptions by the subject.

As salient past appearances, memories are highly useful to the agent. But they also share all the same – if not more – problems as the present appearances: they are mediated and thus unreliable images of true objects. This is also the reason why the intellect cannot have memories. If they are always representational, they are against its proper nature as a non-representational activity. In the ascent, the soul may retain virtuous memories for some time, but they have no real usefulness for the intellect itself.[55] Plotinus makes further explicit that individual souls, just like the Soul, are above time. Their experiences and actions are in time.[56] Since memory is a phenomenon of the temporal realm, souls have memories in the same sense that they engage in other activities of the temporal realm. They cause and have them without becoming affected by them themselves. What is constituted by memories is the awareness of the past *life* of the composite, not the soul itself.

Despite, then, the value given to this ability, Plotinus insists upon its secondary place in the hierarchy of unity and significance. The activities of the souls in the temporal realm happen, as was argued in chapter 1.1, as a series of momentary states governed by the soul. This fact makes acts and states of an embodied soul into composites. They consist of parts of momentary states, which are ontologically tied together by belonging to one stream of consciousness, to one soul, and psychologically united by the unique capacity of memory. For this reason, even a long, blessed, and happy state of an embodied being is a composite, and does not enjoy the kind of unity and invulnerability that truly simple states do. At the level of the non-temporal intellect, there is no need for memories.[57] The intellect is in a simple and unchanging state of wisdom, happiness and awareness of its own state. It does not suffer from any deficiencies that memory could help in repairing.

The significance of memory is, thus, connected to the temporal and embodied self. Memories make perduring selves into mentally connected

[54] This hopefully shows the ways in which my use of the term 'detachment' differs from, e.g., M. F. Burnyeat's, in whose 1980 article detachment from oneself means treating one's own thoughts as those of someone else (esp. pp. 49–53). Burnyeat emphasises that talk about appearances of thought may lead to a misguided view of states that are actually beliefs as states which are free from assent. Plotinus could well agree, if he does presume an initial condition of assenting which already 'colours' the appearances one comes to gain.

[55] IV.4.1.10–14. [56] IV.4.15.15–18; 16.1–7. [57] IV.3.25.13–14; 4.6.1–3; 5.11–13.

continuums. In addition to this, memory has a role to play in making selves into individuals. In the metaphor of the fall of the souls, memory is connected to the phase in which souls embrace their selfhood or individuality (*to de hautēs aspasamenē*; IV.4.3.1–4, at 2). As we saw, a *sunaisthēsis* which yields a memory separates the subject from its environment and other possible subjects. The awareness concerns only what appears to one particular soul as it directs its attention to the salient aspects of the appearance, not what appears to and is noticed by someone else. Saliency and attention depend upon the already constituted set of memories and beliefs, regardless of the fact that two people often perceive the same external objects. Although Plotinus does not make it too explicit, the purport of this is that personal collections of memories have a role to play in forming our characters. He admits that this kind of temporally formed character with personal memories is a self in one sense of the word: 'At least the phantom (*eidōlon*) of Heracles in Hades – this phantom, too, I think, we must recognise as us (*chrē nomizein hēmas*) – remembers all that was done during his life, for the life belonged to him' (IV.3.27.7–10).

Individuality or particularity of the content of memories is touched upon in two further contexts. First, Plotinus seems to postulate two kinds of memories, individual (*idia*) and shared (*koinē*). The lower soul and the higher or individual soul both have their memories, which form together the memories of the composite (IV.3.27.1–6). But this raises the question in which sense the lower soul's memories can be 'common'. At the outset, one would expect the bodily memories to be very personal, whereas the more theoretical or abstract things one remembers, the less their content might have emotionally arousing material or other individual colouring. The reason for this oddity is that Plotinus is not talking here of individuality as privately accessible features of experiences. As we shall see in chapter 4, his divisions into inner/outer and own/shared are based on a rather different idea.

Second, what Plotinus is also interested in regarding the phenomenon of memory is the fact that in different persons, memory functions with different degrees of success. This he explains in terms of three different factors: the differently developed faculty of appearance, the effort and attention given by different people to memories and memorising, and finally the bodily condition which can affect the functioning of memory.[58] The focus is on the level of activity and perfection a person can attain, and the problems involved in this. Since memory is not only something that ties souls to bodily existence, but which also preserves memories of their true intelligible

[58] IV.3.29.33–6.

source,[59] it thus helps them in the intellectual efforts towards knowledge and goodness. In this viewpoint, *inequality* of the powers of the soul has more significance than any individual features of (retained) appearances since it has direct repercussions to self-improvement.

In my interpretation, memory can be seen as a psychological ability designed to unify a temporally extended consciousness, consisting of temporal parts, into a whole. Acting within the past-present-future horizon makes it necessary to have this ability. For its part, the ability renders us as individuals, although this aspect is not emphatic in Plotinus. It does not, however, give us personal identity in the strictest sense of the word. It enables retention of appearances, and thus a feeling of continuity and self-identity as well as the possibilities of meaningful action 'now' and planning for future actions. It secures psychological continuity but not identity in the strict sense. If selves were only collections of mental and physical states, they would be helplessly inferior to anything in the intelligible realm, and would have no true identity. For this reason, as we shall see, Plotinus holds on to a two-level view of the self.

Identity and the inner 'I'

The double-self view attributed to Plotinus with some caution in the previous chapters is most radically embraced in the context of Plotinus' discussions of consciousness and happiness. Although the awareness that one is happy may not seem to be a necessary condition of happiness, it seems natural to think that the awareness of happiness itself is. Happiness, many hold, includes a phenomenal feel of contentment or joy. Creatures with no consciousness are rarely described as happy or miserable. Plotinus defends a somewhat surprising view that an ordinary awareness or consciousness is not a necessary condition for one's happiness:

> But what if he is not conscious (*mē parakolouthē*),[60] [but his mind] sunken by illnesses or magic arts? If they maintain that he is a wise man when he is in this state, and, as it were, fallen into a sleep, what prevents him from being happy? For they do not diminish his happiness when he is in slumber, or reckon the time of it so as to declare that he is not happy for his whole life. (I.4.9.1–7, commenting perhaps the Peripatetics: Arist. *EN* 1102b2–11)

So a man who is asleep, raving mad or has hallucinations of huge spiders is happy because, if he is wise without being aware of his wisdom, he must be capable of being happy too without conscious awareness of it.

[59] IV.4.3.4–6. [60] Cf. above, n. 7.

The claim is somewhat extraordinary even in the context of ancient philosophy, which emphasises happiness as a lifelong project rather than a passing pleasant feeling. It is nonetheless in accordance with Plotinus' theory of the higher or inner soul as the ideal self. As such, it is not only ideally wise but ideally happy as well. Happiness is a timeless activity of the pure, eternal soul. But even if it can be granted to Plotinus that the inner self with its connections to the divine is entirely wise, one might still wish to claim that happiness ought to be something different. Surely it is an important part of happiness that a person can be conscious of that happiness. Otherwise the notion is in danger of becoming vacuous, and displays only Plotinus' insistence that the inner man is wise, good, beautiful as well as happy, and possesses all possible positive properties, no matter that the notions are unrecognisable in their new form. The higher self would no longer seem to be an entity with its particular functions, and thus an addition to rather than competition for the lower self, but truly another self within the same embodied person.

Plotinus recognises the oddity of his claim and in the next few lines he goes on to defend himself against opponents who, like the Peripatetics, maintain that consciousness must have a role to play. The analogies Plotinus offers, like being handsome yet unaware of one's handsome appearance,[61] seem to beg the question since what is at issue is the special nature of happiness with a particular phenomenal feel as opposed to, for instance, bodily characteristics. His main defence is far more interesting:

> Perhaps someone might say that being in a wise state requires perceiving and being conscious (*to aisthanesthai kai parakolouthein*) of its presence, for happiness, too, is present in actual wisdom. If understanding and wisdom were something brought in from outside, perhaps one could use this argument, but if the foundation of wisdom is in some being, or rather in the substance, this substance does not perish in someone who is asleep or generally in one who is called 'unconscious of himself', but in him is the actuality of the substance, and such an actuality is unsleeping, then the wise man, in so far as he is a wise man, will be active even then. It will not be the whole of him that does not notice this activity, but only some part of him. (I.4.9.14–25)

Plotinus refers to his doctrine of soul's connection with its divine source. Each and every embodied soul has a core that remains in direct contact with the intelligible hypostases and with the Good.

The core, like the immortal soul in the *Phaedo*, is stable and unchanging. Plotinus emphasises that not all of the self is unaware of the core self's

[61] I.4.9.13–14.

goodness or, by analogy, happiness, but just a part, that is, the everyday conscious part. Just the embodied aspect of the self may be unaware of it. The central claim is that our substance is the constant activity of the Intellect within. This substance is both happy, and apparently is in full knowledge of its happiness.[62] And moreover, this is what 'we' strictly speaking are. The embodied part is not a crucial part of the self, or, on a more radical reading, a part of it at all, for Plotinus also claims that 'we are not that, but the activity of the Intellect'(I.4.9.28–9). The embodied self is sometimes aware only of what sense perception mediates to it, but there is an inner reality of which it is not aware. This reality is or belongs to our true selves (I.4.10.1–6).

At first sight this would seem to suggest that the embodied self and the inner self no longer have a project in common. The consciousness of the one has no continuity in the other, and the embodied person is connected with the higher one only by the fact that the latter is somewhere inside it. But this should not be the whole truth. Human soul, Plotinus suggests, extends like a line from a centre. One end touches the One and the Good, the other the sensible realm (IV.2.[63]1.14–17). The analogy suggests a rather different picture of the self: There are not two selves but one. The two souls with their proper functions form one self. This self has different aspects or dimensions which are not divided into different parts but which gradually change into one another. As we have also seen in the last chapter, and shall see in chapter 4, the pure Intellect shares structural features with the embodied consciousness and discursive reason, and we can assume that the relation of the two levels is a complicated and subtle one.

Furthermore, Plotinus has an elaborate way of explaining how the inner realities are nonetheless reachable by the embodied self:

> It seems as if understanding (*antilēpsis*) exists and is produced when intellectual thought returns [to itself] and when that in the life of the soul which is active is, as it were, thrust back, as a mirror-reflection when there is a smooth, bright, quiet surface. . . . In this way as regards also the soul, when that in us in which the images of discursive reason and intellect appear is undisturbed, these [images] are seen and recognised in a manner parallel to perception, with the prior recognition that the intellect and discursive reason are active. But when this is broken because the harmony of the body is shaken, discursive reason and intellect function without an image, and then intellection takes place without an appearance (*phantasia*). (I.4.10.6–10; 12–19)

[62] For self-knowledge, cf. chapter 3.2.

[63] I am following here A. H. Armstrong's numbering. In Henry and Schwyzer, this treatise [21] is number IV.1, although it is printed after [4].

Perceptive faculty and *phantasia* work together so as to form images understandable to us out of perceptual information. The same faculty is also engaged in representing forms to the embodied soul.[64] The intellectual activity of the real self is within the reach of embodied consciousness because the faculty of appearance can bring it into our awareness.

Throughout his philosophy, Plotinus stresses the importance of becoming aware of the perfect inner intellect whereas consciousness of our surroundings and the sensible reality is not a necessary part of the activity of pure thought. Moreover, not all functions of consciousness are necessary for the inner goodness to generate good actions in the sensible realm. For this Plotinus gives reading and doing good deeds as examples. Both are best done without consciousness of doing them (*parakolouthēsis*; I.4.10.22–8). Here two kinds or senses of 'awareness' are at play, the minimal or perceptual consciousness, and a second-order awareness of one's thought or actions. In reading, surely we are in many ways conscious of *what* we read, but it is true that we are not second-order conscious that it is reading we are doing all the time. Such a non-immediate second-order[65] awareness would actually endanger the attention paid to the reading itself (lines 24–6). There is also something intuitively compelling in the idea that really good actions are done without second-order consciousness of their goodness. It is hard to imagine, for instance, Saint Francis of Assisi reflecting on his own goodness while feeding little birds.

Plotinus' conclusion is that truly good things issue forth from our inner reality with as little presence or involvement of everyday consciousness as possible. Unnecessary awareness directed to perceiving the actions makes the actions themselves, it seems, dim for us. And this has repercussions for the overall life a person leads. The life of a person who does not in this fashion divide his focus between perception and the inner activity itself is more integrated than the life of a person who, as Plotinus says, pours his life into perception (I.4.10.28–33).

Note that the appearances discussed earlier play an important role in our becoming aware of the core self, and that these are not needed for the intellectual activity to occur or for it to be perfect, but simply for the embodied self to become aware of it.[66] To understand what we read,

[64] This is a complex issue: cf. pp. 147–8.

[65] To exploit the well-known idea of Frankfurt (1971) who speaks, rather, of second-order volitions and beliefs.

[66] At V.1.12.6–13 Plotinus does not use the term appearances but *aisthēsis*: that which – including the activity of the intellect – does not come to the perceptive parts of the soul and does not enter our awareness or consciousness.

some appearances are useful whereas others are not, or may even hinder our understanding. Plotinus often talks about them in the latter, pejorative sense, as distorted pictures rather than faithful images or projections.[67] And once one has realised oneself correctly as intellect and gained a more direct relation to the intelligible realm, it may be possible, at least for passing moments, to function without representations that mediate between the thinker and the objects of thought. Perhaps one can learn to philosophise in the same direct way as one sometimes does good deeds. In the meanwhile we are tied to the body and to the kind of thinking that uses appearances. Therefore it is best to train the faculty of appearance in the Stoic manner to function with clarity.

The happiness of the inner 'I' is both complete and secure, unlike for example pleasant life that consists mainly of bodily pleasures (I.4.14.9–11; 26–30). As will be indicated in thenext chapter,in this Plotinus follows Plato but he may also borrow from Hellenistic discussions on the vulnerability of many everyday pleasures. Together with the Stoics, for example, he praises the things that bring us peace of mind. But although the invulnerability of happiness is an important motivation for Plotinus, introducing that discussion will not fully resolve the critique presented. Plotinus' opponent is entitled to say that he still does not have to grant him the use of the notion of happiness with respect to this kind of peculiar existence unless it appears in the faculty of appearance and is thus attainable by the conscious, embodied self whose happiness most people in this life are very much interested in. The discussion seems unpersuasive if the reason for it is that Plotinus maintains this simply to retain the symmetry of his double psychology.

I suggest that one crucial reason Plotinus insists that the inner self inside the embodied self is happy all along is that in this way he can maintain something like mental connectedness. The real or higher self is an ideal self for two reasons: it crystallises the very essence of human nature, a paradigm of a person as a subject of thought and knowledge. As a Platonic blessed thing, it is not only happy but paradigmatically happy. But it is also a paradigm for a conscious subject, capable of self-knowledge, as we shall later see in detail, as well as of self-awareness and happiness in its state. The inner self is aware of itself, the same 'I' all the time, and even the embodied self has some connectedness with it. The latter has access to higher wisdom and happiness sometimes directly, sometimes through the correct use of the faculty of appearance. Plotinus cannot claim that the

[67] Compare, e.g., V.1.10.27; 12.7.

happiness of the higher self with which we are at all times connected starts only when our soul gets rid of its earthly shackles, because then the higher self to which the embodied composite is attached would not be identical to the completely wise and perfectly happy discarnate self. There would be no mental continuity, no *our* selves in the higher realm. The story about the fall of the souls and their unfallen part, which we encountered in the very first chapter, is supposed to convey this connectedness. Hence he is committed also to maintain that the inner self is fully content even when I am conscious only of the life of the self that is brutally tortured or suffers from a severe melancholy.

The perfect and immortal inner 'I' may not be a person in any meaningful way, and Plotinus owes his audience an explanation of what, if anything, the two have in common. One way for the embodied person to become aware of itself as the inner core will be suggested in the following chapter. But here Plotinus has striven to secure invulnerability in the face of two different attacks: that since we are composites, nothing in us may have a true unity and identity, and that whatever the discarnate and perfect soul is, it will have nothing to do with the embodied self. From his point of view, the later Neoplatonic move to abandon the theory of the undescended soul and thus to sever the mental connectedness between the embodied self and the ascended, pure self, is fatal.[68] The state acquired by ascending closer to God would not happen for the same entity. It would, rather, require a wholesale transformation to another kind of being. For Plotinus, such a salvation is not a salvation of this 'I' but something happening to a new and foreign entity – that is, not *salvation* at all.

[68] Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 211. For the doctrine of the undescended soul, the later Neoplatonists' reasons for abandoning it as well as their responses to the problem, cf. Steel 1978: esp. 34–51.

CHAPTER 3

The rational self and its knowledge of itself

The picture of selfhood emerging from our material is, if not thoroughly, nonetheless emphatically intellectual. The rational soul – and especially its paradigmatic part, the intellect – is identified as the true self, as that which gives us stability and identity. For this reason alone, philosophy of the self must include a description of the nature of intellect and rational capacities. Furthermore, elevating pure reason as a normative ideal has important consequences: it acts as a regulative paradigm and principle for embodied and temporal selfhood. An understanding of the rational powers of the soul will thus also reveal indications of what kind of selfhood is held to be valuable and what kind of functioning and processes are believed to cultivate it.

As such, there is nothing striking in Plotinus' intellectualism. Most ancient philosophers held that the universe has an intelligible structure, and that this structure is divinely beautiful. Striving to become aware of the essential and intelligible order of the universe is a natural inclination and capacity of the human *psuchē*, and this process brings the soul itself closer to order and beauty, shaping the states of the human soul according to the perfection and order of the universe. Acquisition of knowledge is thus not merely instrumental for rationally organising one's life towards happiness and well-being, but is something that quite literally brings human beings closer to a divine state, to god-likeness.[1]

For Plotinus, self-integration and normatively ideal self-constitution both depend upon rational self-realisation. This realisation is not just a recognition of oneself as reason rather than body or composite of body and soul, but it involves actualising those rational capacities and methods that have the power of exposing the essential intelligible order of the universe. Understanding of this order is the key to the soul's stability and integration – its perfection and god-like state. The intelligible structure is

[1] E.g. Long 2001: 28; Sedley 1999: 326–7.

reflected in the beautifully ordered perceptible universe, but the true object of contemplation that brings with itself a stable state of knowledge and happiness is the intelligible source and paradigm of that order, the realm of Platonic forms.

The first part of this chapter will deal with those powers of the soul that enable this intellectual grasp. After an assessment of the significance of this to Plotinus' understanding of selfhood, the second part will move on to a crucial question of rational subjectivity, namely the question of self-knowledge. Can the self know itself, its own essential nature and structures? In its attempts to grasp itself, does it approach itself in the same fashion as it approaches the universe, or is self-knowledge a different kind of relation?

3.1. THE POWERS OF INTELLECT AND REASON

The self, as suggested in chapter 2, is a unitary centre of awareness. It is that point in which perceptions and thoughts come together to perceptions and thoughts *of one single awareness*, one perceiver and thinker. But the human mind is not just a container of perceptions or beliefs. Even within one awareness, a haphazard collection of appearances or beliefs would not yield a unified understanding of anything. In the act of thinking, the contents of awareness are organised in different ways, and ideally this process ought to lead into knowledge and a unified account of the world. The topic of this chapter is rationality, the cognitive powers of soul and intellect that unify the rational subject. A further issue about unity concerns the relation between the two selves, the intellect and the embodied, discursive reason. Although the former has already been identified as the ideal self, and can be said to have a role also as the normative ideal of the self-constitution of the everyday self (discussed more closely in chapter 4), it may look as if Plotinus is propounding a theory of two selves. If the human mind would correctly identify itself with the ideal level, it might change into a different kind of being, and thus the ideal self would not be primarily explanatory for everyday selfhood, but another mode of existence. This would suggest a radical discontinuity in selfhood in its journey towards self-improvement and ideal selfhood. This challenge, it will be argued below, is founded upon a certain reading of Platonic epistemology to which we shall now turn.

An obstinate generalisation holds that Platonic epistemology and Plato's views on rational thought boil down to one single dogma, that of recollection, *anamnēsis*. Recollection may be given a special and rather simplistic interpretation. Ancient epistemology may be understood as mere grasping

or a 'vision' of universals.[2] Knowing forms is something altogether different from everyday thought and having beliefs.[3] Furthermore, it is often thought that this Platonic divide between innately known forms or ideas and empirically gained information reaches its peak in Neoplatonism. There are two reasons for this: in Neoplatonism, embodied, feeble human minds can only work on images or appearances, that is, likenesses of eternal forms, the forms themselves remaining in their eternal intelligible sphere. There is a sharp distinction between discursive thought, *dianoia*, which happens in time and uses propositions, different kinds of representations and empirical data, and unmediated noetic contemplation of the *nous* (verb *noein*), of Platonic forms.[4] This, in turn, might lead the Neoplatonists to a view that true knowledge, a direct relation to the intelligible realm, actually does not resemble thought at all, but rather a quasi-mystical identity relation beyond words, concepts and any complexity.[5]

Were this interpretation true, the cognitive states that characterise the two levels would have little in common, and two immediate worries would arise. First, if the objects of knowledge grasped in this unifying vision are intelligible forms and never the particulars of the sensible realm, what guarantees that this cognitive state is beneficial for embodied human beings? How much does the knowledge thus acquired have to do with the world we actually live in? Second, given the strong dissimilarity between ordinary thought and contemplation, it becomes questionable whether the former can lead to the latter. If ordinary philosophising happens in a manner altogether different from the actual possession of knowledge, an account ought to be provided as to why, how and under which conditions ordinary thought would transform itself into that higher cognitive state.[6] Plotinus, I will argue below, is not vulnerable to the second problem because contemplation and propositional thought – despite their manifest dissimilarities – are not entirely different nor disconnected. They will be shown to

[2] E.g. Rorty 1980 in his introductory chapter.

[3] Even within expert research on Plato, it has been suggested that Plato is, for instance, interested only in philosophical knowledge, not in everyday learning or concept formation, and that information coming from the senses – and by extension, I assume, ordinary thought relying on perceptions – is not just untrustworthy, but often downright misleading. Cf. Scott 1995: section 1. Others think that the gap between believing and knowing need not be – at least in all Plato's works – that wide: e.g. Fine 1990; Frede 1996; Silverman 1990; Thesleff 1999: 85–7.

[4] For the notions, cf. Plat. *Resp*. 509d. For an exposition of the differences in Plotinus, see Bussanich 1997: 192 ff.

[5] A strong version of this view is sometimes already attributed to Plotinus, not just to the later Neoplatonists. Lloyd 1969/70; Rappe 2000. Cf. also Bussanich 1997.

[6] Rappe 2000 (esp. introduction) points out that the Neoplatonists may have had a general problem concerning the purpose of propositional thought and talk, if it never attains to the intelligible objects. The later Neoplatonists resorted to theurgy and other non-propositional means for this very reason.

share manifest similarities as well, like multiplicity and certain sameness-and-difference structures. The first worry poses perhaps a more pressing dilemma, to which Plotinus does offer potential answers, although these do not develop into a mature solution.

The interpretation suggested here emphasises the connections and similarities between discursive thinking and contemplation. It takes its starting point in the multiplicity of the Intellect. The Intellect is, famously, described as one-many (*hen polla*; e.g., V.1.8.26). Against the strand in Plotinus scholarship that emphasises the first half of that description as well as the distinctive quality of *noēsis* as a kind of partless intuition that shares very little, if anything, with discursive thought,[7] it will be argued that even though a sharp difference is made between knowing forms and having beliefs, the cognitive processes share important similarities in both cases. Without means to identify things as well as to discriminate between kinds of things and their place in the overall system, beliefs would remain unbound and confused. But without similar features the Intellect, too, would be disorderly and unstable.

For Plotinus, who bases his view on the late dialogues of Plato, the mind is a complex set of capacities to process information given and to grasp the intelligible structure of the universe. Plotinus, as we shall see, construes noetic contemplation to explain not merely infallibility but also the importance of systematicity and coherence for knowledge and selfhood. Perfect knowledge, that is, noetic contemplation, is a perfectly coherent set of forms, a complete view of forms in all their interrelations. And we should remember that the Intellect is an explanatory and paradigmatic entity. Because its activity is described as life, and especially as thought, it can reasonably be expected that it is explanatory of a thinking thing, that is, of a mind. What is said about the Intellect will have implications for what Plotinus believes is essential to thought in general.[8] In consciously downplaying the differences of noetic and discursive thought, and highlighting their similarities, I hope to reveal something central about Plotinus' views on rational thought. As we shall see, these are the competencies to recognise individuals, to distinguish kinds, and to collect items under one heading. Recollecting[9] involves understanding the relations between forms.

[7] For example, Lloyd 1969/70; Rappe 2000. For the *polla* aspect, cf. Emilsson forthcoming a; Gerson 1994: 170–84.

[8] Cf. for example V.1.11.

[9] As Suzanne Stern-Gillet noted in a paper (Liverpool, 2004), Plotinus does not use the term *anamnēsis* too often, but although it does not have the same significance in Plotinus as it does in Plato, the former does seem to retain the notion.

If Plotinus' philosophy is examined from this point of view, he succeeds in giving an elaborate account of some of the basic functions of reasoning. Self as reason is the power to form a coherent and unified understanding of the intelligible order of the universe. This process renders the self internally ordered and stable as well as cognitively self-sufficient.

Complex intellect

The merit of a view which emphasises the unitary nature of intellect and intellectual contemplation is that it correctly demarcates everyday thinking and noetic contemplation as two different sorts of cognitive state. Something like the following list of differences has been suggested:[10]

Nous	*Dianoia*
atemporal	temporal
non-inferential	inferential
grasps all at once	grasps its object piecemeal
infallible or unerring	fallible or erring
non-representational	representational
	propositional

The table illuminates two features. First, with respect to certain central characteristics, the two kinds of thought are opposites. Second, as the empty box suggests, there is a genuine question – and one debated by scholars – whether non-inferential thought of the *nous* is also non-propositional.[11] Noetic thought cannot involve ordinary linguistic propositions. Things like premises, axioms, verbal expressions or predicates are alien to it.[12] These are all things that mediate between the thinker and the objects of thought, whereas the Intellect thinks forms themselves. *Nous*'s activity is not conceptual if by concepts are understood, broadly, entities in the mind that represent the forms.[13]

The above list would also seem to create the kind of problems we started with. The two kinds of cognition are structurally different and thus their relation to one another is far from evident. Moreover, it may be asked as to the kind of relation, if any, concepts and propositions involving them have to the objects of *noēsis* and knowledge, that is, the forms. Let us postpone

[10] Lloyd 1969/70; Bussanich 1997 adds *nous*'s self-reflexivity to the list; Emilsson forthcoming a.
[11] Lloyd 1969/70; Sorabji 1982; Emilsson forthcoming a.
[12] *Prostaseis, axiōmata, lekta*; V.5.1.38–49. For intellect's identity with its contents of thought, cf. section 3.2, below.
[13] For concepts in Platonism, Gerson 1999; cf. 259 ff.

the latter worry and concentrate first on the former. An attempt to try to see noetic thought as a relative of or standard for ordinary thought, and not just some undifferentiated intuition, has its own value. Otherwise, for instance, the claim that discursive reasoning gets its powers or laws from the intellect within, and is, as it were, an image of it in time would hardly make sense.[14] Furthermore, even if the activity of the *nous* were non-inferential, it does not need to be undifferentiated. All kinds of thinking involve, as we shall see, many 'somethings', even if not many likenesses of forms, inferences or propositions.[15] Intellect, Plotinus says explicitly, is not just one but multiple (*polus*; V.1.5.1). When compared to the absolute unity of the One, it exemplifies two kinds of difference.[16]

In the metaphysical hierarchy of emanation, Intellect's coming to be from the One is described as happening through phases. By its nature, the One is such that it overflows. The overflow is, as it were, an entity distinct from the One itself. There is not just one but two things. In the timeless 'process' of emanation, the overflow will become everything there is, the intelligible forms. But what emanates from the One is undefined, and it only becomes defined when it turns back towards its source.[17] Intellect is, hence, not just an emanation from the One. The full-fledged Intellect is described as the seeing of the One that results from the conversion.[18]

The Intellect is the duality between the thinker and the objects of thought. Even though Plotinus holds that this duality is in some peculiar sense one, in identity, the whole point of the cumbersome metaphysics of Intellect's emanation and conversion to look back at the One is to create that distinction. Noetic thought is not exhausted, for example, by John Bussanich's otherwise subtle description of 'an unmediated and absolute awareness of pure being with which the knower is identical, transcending the spatio-temporal, and occurring in a soteriological context of maximal

[14] For example, cf. V.3.3.31–2; 44–5; 4.1–4.

[15] Against Lloyd 1969/70.

[16] *Heterotēs*, often translated also as otherness. For the two sorts, Emilsson forthcoming a: chapter 4.

[17] Sometimes called the 'inchoate' intellect. Cf. Emilsson forthcoming a: ch. 2. Before actually seeing the One the Intellect is said to have appetite, or desire, and unformed sight (V.3.11.12). The desire, or 'throwing at', is an active desire towards the good, towards knowledge (Cf. VI.9.2.40–2). For the two phases, see esp. Emilsson 1999.

[18] V.1.7.5–6. Some scholars hold that it is the One who turns and sees, choosing for the subject of *heōra* the One, and not the Intellect. This way of reading the passage is syntactically correct, and in a sense, of course, what turns is an overflow and product of the One. It seems, however, that by turning and looking at the One this product already establishes itself as being something separate, something distinct. One solution is to consider the coming to be of the Intellect as a twofold process: it first halts and then thinks. The undefined or inchoate *nous* is the subject of *heōra*. That *nous* precedes (in a realm beyond time) the fully defined *nous* that actually sees the One. For discussion, cf. Hadot 1963: 95–6; Igal 1971; Atkinson 1983: 156–60; Schroeder 1986.

value and joy'.[19] Without the terms 'being' and 'knower' this otherwise fitting description could be about the contact with the One, and hence miss the essential or peculiar features of *thought*. Noetic thought is different from the highest possible level the human soul can momentarily gain, a kind of presence or 'touch' of the One, where all distance and difference will cease to exist.[20] It involves as a first plurality the duality between the subject and the object.

Admittedly, it is possible for the Intellect also to transcend itself and to have a so-called supra-intellectual vision of the One.[21] This important aspect has gained much scholarly attention, and it is very likely that the above suggested description grasps its essential nature, rather than the whole of Intellect's functioning.[22] But the Intellect is not just a faculty or principle of intuition, if one means by 'intuition' only a kind of undiscriminated vision of unity. As I will argue, one aspect of it is *a principle of rational competencies*. A significant feature of noetic thought is discernment of differences.[23] To get a grip on this competence, let us turn to look at Plotinus' view of the Intellect as multiplicity.

The second plurality is the diversity involved in being and thinking. Intellect's vision of the One is described as a divisible seeing of something indivisible (V.1.7.17–18). Even though the One is indivisible, an absolutely simple entity, Intellect's vision of it has parts. Both the overflow and Intellect's competence to 'see' the One become defined. The Intellect gives rise to discriminations and distinguishable items within its mind, that is, the multiplicity of forms, substances or real beings, *ousiai*, 'all the beauty of the ideas and all the intelligible gods'.[24] This is its act of self-constitution in which it becomes its own object.[25]

The parts, that is, the substances, are defined. The intelligible, Plotinus insists, must be stable and orderly. Its stability (*stasis*) consists of 'limitation'

[19] Bussanich 1997: 198–9. For the same reasons I disagree with Alfino 1988.

[20] VI.9.8.33–5.

[21] Rappe 2000. In my view, although this vision is the ultimate end of the Intellect, it is not according to its own essence and way of being, thought. (This is why Plotinus says that to achieve such a vision the Intellect must not be wholly itself; III.8.9.29–32.) My emphasis will be on the proper functioning of the Intellect and not on its ideal direction. For the supra-intellectual vision, cf. also Bussanich 1988 and Phillips 1990 (who disagree on whether the supra-intellectual vision coincides with the pre-intellectual).

[22] Some treat it as the Intellect's higher aspect or nature, others as a feature of the inchoate Intellect.

[23] Emilsson 1995: 31; Emilsson forthcoming a: *passim*.

[24] V.1.7.29–31; V.8.5.13–19; 4.44–8; 9.5.12–15. R. Sorabji has drawn my attention to the fact that Plotinus elsewhere claims that the intelligibles are prior to the Intellect (e.g. V.4.2.4–7). It may therefore make sense to claim that in the first phase of coming to be of the Intellect the intelligibles, too, already in some sense come into existence. Its thinking is a further stage of defining objects, and 'after' that stage it can be said to become, wholly, the Intellect. It is nonetheless important to emphasise that for the Intellect to fulfil its role, the second phase is necessary. Cf. Sorabji 2001.

[25] Cf. Schroeder 1987: 678; Crystal 2002: 185.

(*horismos*) and 'shape' (*morphē*). Real beings are distinct entities, limited from one another. They are always self-same but distinct from others.[26] *Ousiai* are varied, and have, as it were, their own shape.[27] The intelligible does not have qualities in the same sense as those it produces in the sensible realm, nor is it materially divided, but it is many and consists of parts that are varied and all with their own peculiar feature (*poikilos*, *polumorphos*; II.4.4.15–17; VI.7.32.3). On the one hand, the Intellect is a unity without spatio-temporal distinctions or divisions. It is an eternal and stable collection of forms, undivided by matter or time, all together in unity. On the other hand its contents, the forms, can be taken individually each with its own, specific difference.[28] Intellect has two slants, the non-dividing and undivided Intellect as well as the dividing Intellect.[29] Note that the latter, the function to divide and define, is the feature which differentiates the Intellect sharply from the absolute One.

The Intellect is postulated as both an entity that explains the existence of multiplicity, and as paradigmatic thinking. The ways in which metaphysics and epistemology converge are familiar already from Plato. As in the *Timaeus*, the created universe has a certain arrangement and order, and, moreover, an order which is intelligible, transparent to (perfect) reason. For Plotinus, the Intellect is essentially an entity which, when turning to look at the One, results in a differentiated vision. It is involved in creating and sustaining the multiplicity of the things that exist, but also in making it definable and understandable, penetrable to reason. This activity is metaphysical inasmuch as it is a link in the proceeding creation of the existing multiplicity, but the act can also be described as cognitive, a sort of reified thinking, because it is a significant link in the creation of a universe essentially governed by reason, and therefore intelligible. The double function holds, to a degree, also for human souls. Each human soul is a further unfolded image of a particular intellect, which in turn is a kind of part of the Intellect, and like the Intellect and the Soul, particular souls, too, both participate in the creation of this universe and function as principles of

[26] II.4.4.2–6; V.1.7.24–6. Stern-Gillet 2000 (esp. 51) seems to hold a similar opinion. According to her, *morphē* sometimes differs from *eidos* in that it refers to the individual element as a property of intelligible matter.

[27] ὥρισται γὰρ ἤδη καὶ οἷον μορφὴν ἕκαστον ἔχει; V.1.7.22–4.

[28] This is well spelled out by Stern-Gillet 2000 (esp. 53), who identifies two sorts of beauty in the intelligible, that of the whole (*to pankalon*) and of forms taken individually. It may also be good to emphasise in this context that forms are real items of the intelligible. Even though the intelligible serves in many ways an explanatory or paradigmatic function, and even though it resembles a mind, Plotinus is not an idealist. The Intellect and forms are metaphysically real even though everything that exists is in a sense a product of a peculiar intelligising mind. From the ancient point of view, that very reality is what makes them explanatorily powerful.

[29] ὁ ἀμέριστος καὶ μὴ μερίζων νοῦς, ὁ μερίζων νοῦς; V.9.8.20–2.

conscious and cognitive capacities. The intellect must in some way explain the plurality involved both in the universe and in thinking.

Platonism embraces the possibility that language and talk reflect or represent what one has in one's mind, a kind of silent mental language. Language involves subjects and attributes and copula connecting them, all following each other and forming complex sentences. Mental language presumably shows that very same complexity in involving concepts.[30] Plotinus emphasises that both language and discursive thinking consist of a procession of items in time, whereas in *noēsis* everything is thought 'simultaneously'. But Plotinus insists that the latter, too, is complex since its objects are varied, thus including many acts of intellection in the same way as there are many acts of perception of a face.[31] Thought, and also knowledge, as he argues following the *Sophist*, require multiplicity. As we saw in the first chapter, knowledge is said to be expressible in an account, a *logos*, and *logos* in turn is said to be something many.[32] In the act of thinking mind has to depart from strict unity and engage in what is numerous and multiple. To recall an idea encountered earlier: if what is a completely partless one, the One for example, were to try to speak about itself, it would say something about itself which is either (a) a lie or (b) makes it a manifold, claims Plotinus. 'I am this' already requires the distinction between 'I' and 'this'.[33] Therefore, Plotinus goes on to say,

> the thinker must understand one thing and another, and the thing thought, in being thought (*katanooumenon*),[34] must have diversity. Or else there will be no thought of it, but a touching and only a sort of contact that cannot be expressed or thought (*arrhētos kai anoētos*). (V.3.10.40–3)

What is utterly or absolutely simple is incapable of thought. There is no distinction between thinker and the objects of thought. More to the point, that which has no parts – or properties, understood as parts – cannot be described in any meaningful way, and that which cannot be even named is not available for cognition. Absolute unities admit no cognitive complexity and cannot therefore be apprehended.[35]

Thought is necessarily about what is many, something that involves diversity.[36] Intellect's objects of thought must be many and various for

[30] *Phil.* 38c–e; *Soph.* 263e–4a; *Tht.* 189e–190a; 206c–e. It should be noted that the so-called dream theory of the *Tht.* faces problems in the dialogue, and the discussion ends in aporia; cf. p. 73 above. Plot. *Enn.* I.2.3.27–30. For concepts in Plotinus, Gerson 1999: 74–6; cf. 258 ff.

[31] IV.4.1.14–25. [32] VI.9.4.5–6; *Soph.* 244. On the *Sophist*, cf. McCabe 2000: 67 ff.

[33] V.3.10.35–9. [34] The verb used in *Ti.* 90d of making the thinker like the things thought of.

[35] For Plato's attack on monism in the *Sophist*, McCabe 2000: esp. 66–73.

[36] Cf. VI.7.39.18. As we saw in chapter 1.2, this connects with Plotinus' reading of Socrates' dream in the *Theaetetus* (201e): an element can only be named 'itself by itself', nothing can be predicated of it, whereas what is a compound is knowable and utterable.

them to be thought, to be 'expressible' (that is, not *arrhētos*). And because Intellect is its contents of thought, it itself consists of separable parts.[37] Noetic thought in itself does not operate with names, nor does noetic apprehension proceed for example as a list of properties the things have. But for the forms to function as epistemological foundations they have to be of a certain kind. Therefore the Intellect is not just one, nor does it consist of merely numerically different items. For concepts and linguistic items to name *different* entities, the ultimate objects of thought must be varied in themselves.

As we have already seen, Intellect's contents, the forms, have both limitation and their own peculiar shape. Difference does not only draw lines between distinct forms: there is actually also difference in the 'content'. Qualitative differences are all expressions of a more general kind 'difference' (*diaphora*) but each form taken individually will have its own peculiar difference.[38] The activity of the Intellect, Plotinus insists, is *not* something unvaried, nor composed of like parts.[39]

The picture that we have sketched reveals an essential property of thought, be it human or perfect: thought is an activity that necessarily embraces a manifold of differentiated objects.

[37] ἑτερότητι χωριζομένου ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ μέρη; IV.3.4.9–10.

[38] V.1.4.41. The mysterious role of Difference seems to be the origin of what I consider misunderstandings in the research literature. Some scholars have conceived of difference as a tendency towards non-existence (e.g. Rist 1971; Schroeder 1978). But for Plotinus, the realm below the One is the realm of being, for the One is *beyond* being. In the *Sophist* (257b–259a) Plato seems to make a distinction between non-being as the contrary of being and non-being as other than being. Being is other than things that participate in being. Things that are, participate both in being and difference (from being). There is no 'contrary to being' but everything that 'is' is other than being, and is in that sense 'non-being'. Plotinus makes a further distinction. There is (1) total non-being; (2) the non-being of such things as movement and rest that are other than being; (3) the form of non-being – which he identifies with matter. The third is a complete lack of definition (I.8.3.7–13; II.5.5; III.6.7.12–26). In these distinctions I rely on O'Brien 1995. The realm of sense admittedly has an element of non-being in the third sense. This is the corruptive force of matter, which as a non-being is capable of making for instance human individuals less than they actually should be (VI.5.12.19–22). But difference is non-being only in the second sense – as is everything other than being itself. In fact, difference has a central role in securing the existence of something other than the One. Although all that is not One strives towards the perfect unity and goodness of the One (VI.2.11), it exists only as long as it is separated from it by some difference.

Another, related view is that difference is not a positive qualitative difference, it consists only in the failure of the image to display the attributes of the original (cf. esp. Schroeder 1978). In a sense this is true. Everything below the One is imperfect in comparison to its perfect source. But since the One by its outward activity creates the multiplicity, the resulting complicated structure has to be explained. It is not only the realm of imperfection but of variety and composition. Differences secure multiplicity and variety although they do not alone explain it. To have an identity, an entity must be both distinguishable from other entities and, as we saw in chapter 1, something one, a whole, i.e., a structured and definable individual.

[39] ὁμοιομερές τι καὶ ἀποίκιλον; VI.7.13.10; 9.2.43–5.

Sameness and difference

In the first chapter, on ontology, it was argued that forms and *logoi* make up intelligible structures and hierarchies. For instance, there is a form of living being inclusive of all other forms of living beings. These forms are both 'parts' of the living being as well as independent, separate entities. They are likely to form a further species–genera hierarchy. If the Intellect's activity both creates and embraces this complex manifold, as was just suggested, it may be asked in which manner it grasps what it thinks. If it does not just see this multiplicity as an undifferentiated whole, but as a structure of differentiated objects, something ought to be said about the competence through which this happens. I will suggest that Plotinus offers a description of this competence (strictly speaking activity) by reintroducing a distinctive group of Platonic intelligible entities.

Plotinus famously – or notoriously – denounced the Aristotelian categories, restoring the Platonic 'greatest kinds' (*megista genē*) as the genera of intelligible being. He derives the five 'first kinds' (*prōta genē*) from a reflection on how the Intellect acts. The genera are brought into play as the necessary condition of Intellect's life and *act of thinking* (*noēsis*).[40] Two genera, sameness and difference, are especially important in thought.

In the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger distinguishes first rest, motion and being, and concludes that all three are different from each other but the same as themselves. So there must be sameness and difference which are the fourth and the fifth kind, and both are such that they pervade every other kind. Every kind is different from the others but the same as itself.[41] Like Plato, Plotinus starts with being, motion and rest.[42] As in the *Sophist*, sameness and difference are derived through reflection on the former three. In order to distinguish 'being' from 'motion', for instance, we use the concept of them being 'different' from each other.[43] Like Plato, Plotinus also thinks that this necessitates not just a concept but a metaphysical entity 'difference'. Both rely on the strong assumption that if something

[40] VI.2.6–8 *passim*, particular passages to be discussed in detail below.

[41] *Soph*. 254b–257a.

[42] VI.2.8.1 ff.; cf. V.1.4.35–7. The notions have already been mentioned in *Tht*. when Socrates and Theaetetus discuss the suggestion that perception is knowledge. Each sense may have its own proper objects but there is some one thing that can compare these with each other. In this context Plato brings to the fore the notions of 'being', 'likeness', 'same' and their opposites. These are things that cannot be found in the sense perceptions themselves (esp. *Tht*. 185d–186a). Cf. Burnyeat 1990: 52–61.

[43] Plotinus thinks that these categories are primary, and others can be derived from them. E.g., the fact that the kinds are many indicates that there must be 'number', and because each of them has its own particularity (*idiotēs*), there must be quality (*to poion*) (V.1.4.42–3).

has a property or feature, the property must be there 'to be had', that is, it must be placed somewhere in the metaphysics.[44]

The activity of thinking the three genera reveals that two more are involved at all times.

> They [the three first genera which have come to mind together in a kind of blur] come together, and he [i.e. anyone, *tis* from line 27, but especially the Intellect], so to speak, mingles that which is confused, not separating them (*ou diakrinōn*), and, as it were, setting apart and restraining and separating (*diakrinein*), he perceives being, rest and motion, these three and each one. Does he not say that they are different from each other and set them apart in difference, and see the difference in being when he posits three and each of them one? And again [when he brings] the same ones into one and in unity and all one, does he not bring them into same (*eis tauton au sunagōn*)[45] and, looking, see that sameness has come to be and is? (VI.2.8.31–8)

Sameness and difference come into the picture once the Intellect attempts to consider being, rest and motion as individuals and in the context of each other. Intellect's competence to distinguish the three as separate genera requires the notion 'difference', and its competence to classify them as belonging to the group of primary genera requires the notion 'sameness'. The genera resemble, of course, more universals than particulars, but in the passage Plotinus treats them as individuals: taken individually there are several individual genera each with its own proper characteristic. Together they form the group of genera. Sameness and difference define the relations of one individual – in this case one genus – with other individuals, in the context of other genera. The genus 'motion', for instance, is different from, and other than, the genus 'rest'.

Note that Plotinus abandons the account of the *Sophist* in deriving sameness from there being something similar in all genera, something that unifies them.[46] There is something that makes them the collection 'genera'. Here he is not thinking of the identity or individuation of entities, of their identification and demarcation from one another, but of collecting together the same kinds of things. For example, sameness relates the genus 'motion' to the group of other genera. Elsewhere Plotinus acknowledges the meaning of 'self-same' or 'identical' (A is A), while above he is talking of sameness (A can be B, too, as two individuals can be of same species).[47]

[44] In one of the deductions of the second part of the *Parmenides*, Parmenides argues that the natures of the same and the different differ from the nature of one (139c–e). For the ways in which Plato differentiates one from sameness, cf. Schofield 1974; Gill 1996: 73–4.

[45] That this refers to the Platonic method of collection and division will be argued below.

[46] VI.2.8.37. [47] E.g. III.7.5, esp. line 21; cf. chapter 1.1.

Sameness and difference are not just metaphysical features or contents of the Intellect but they are said to be always implicit in thought:

> And again, each of the things thought carries along with it that sameness and difference; or what does that think, which does not have one and another? And if each [of the things thought?] is *logos*,[48] it is many. It [the Intellect] acquires knowledge of itself as being a diversified eye or as [the seeing] of a complexity of colours. For if it attended to that which is one and partless, it would not be rational: for what would there be to say about it, or to understand? . . . (V.3.10.27–32)

Plotinus describes thought as being of different colours or ways of seeing. There are 'ones and anothers', distinguishable parts. They are self-same entities, distinguishable from others because different from them.[49]

In thought, sameness and difference have a double role to play. First, difference is needed to distinguish the subject and object of thought (*hin' ē nooun kai nooumenon*; V.1.4.37–8; cf. V.3.10.24–7), which is indispensable for there to be any thought. As we have already seen, thought requires that there be an object of thought, the competence to demarcate something as separate and other from oneself. The ability to recognise difference, Plotinus believes, responds to this need. Sameness, in turn, unifies the Intellect and its thoughts. If the objects were just different and separate from the intellect, it would not grasp them at all. Grasping is conceptualised as sameness. In the Aristotelian manner, the thinker becomes the forms it thinks. This is supposed to secure infallibility and to yield the desired immediacy or direct exposure to the object of thinking.[50] Second, difference is what demarcates the objects of thought from one another, whereas sameness is what is common in them.[51] Again, Plotinus connects sameness not with identity, but with grouping meaningful collections, that is, groups of items that share an important feature or structure, like species. The Intellect has an innate competence to recognise individuals and their relations to other

[48] What does Plotinus mean by *logos* in the texts above? He may mean simply language, or be referring to some kind of Theaetetean 'proper account'. Cf. Ryle 1939: 136 ff.; Fine 1979. For a thorough analysis, cf. Burnyeat 1990: 134–87. But Plotinus may also have, again, metaphysical questions in the back of his mind; after all, *logoi* are the manifold of rational forming principles of the things that there are (III.2.2.15–17; 23–4; V.9.3; VI.1.29.10–14; VI.7.11.10). As we shall see below, dialectical understanding of the metaphysical structure and order of the universe and its principles is central to philosophising.

[49] Perhaps Plotinus thinks they are like different birds in the aviary, the pieces of knowledge one already has somehow but can 'catch again', since he uses the same verb as Plato for acquiring knowledge (*katamanthanein*; *Tht*. 198d). The verb is also used in *Prm*. 128a in the discussion whether what exists is many or not.

[50] Cf. Emilsson forthcoming a. For my understanding of the identity theory, cf. section 3.2, below.

[51] Cf. V.1.4.39–40.

individuals in terms of being distinct from other entities but, for example, belonging to the same group as them.

The competence with which the genus 'difference' empowers the Intellect is that of distinguishing, *diakrinein*.

> For the Intellect must always grasp [its objects] by difference and sameness if it is going to think. It will not distinguish (*diakrinei*) itself from the intelligibles if it keeps to itself, nor will it contemplate all, unless some difference came to bring all into existence. For there would not even be duality. (VI.7.39.5–9)[52]

Suitable to the activity of the Intellect, the Greek verb *diakrinō* has the double significance of both really separating things from one another (an ontological question) and of distinguishing the separable items as separable (a question about cognitive capacities). In the *Sophist*, which would seem to offer the most important point of reference for Plotinus' usage, the term *diakrinō* is used at the very beginning in a non-technical sense to refer to the attempt to distinguish a philosopher from the sophist. Later, *technē diakritikē* is, in general, the art of discriminating. In the context of examples of divisions performed in the dialogue, the verb used more often is *diaireō*, but *diakrinō* does reappear in a more technical context of discriminating by kinds (*kata genos*).[53] Understood as an effective power in Plotinian metaphysics, the Intellect separates itself from the One, and creates multiplicity by its thinking. This can also be read as a metaphorical way of saying what is essential to human cognitive capacities, that is, to be a subject of thinking detached from the objects, and to make discriminations about the information given. The Intellect is the principle of the competence to do all this.

Another Platonic background may help to clarify what kind of innate competencies Plotinus is after. Recall the souls in the *Timaeus*. All souls are created by the Demiurge out of ingredients which include both *the same and the different*. The recipe of this cosmic cookery lesson has been interpreted like this: the soul has identity by having the properties of sameness and difference in appropriate layers, that is, by having an intelligible and coherent

[52] Passages like this are in opposition to V.3.15.20 in which it is argued that one cannot divide the intellect for it is all together (διακρίναι οὐκ ἂν ἔχοις, ὅτι ὁμοῦ πάντα). For a discussion of the latter passage, cf. Lloyd 1969/70; Emilsson forthcoming a. Emilsson suggests, sensibly, that the latter usage could mean something like isolation, especially since it is followed just a few lines below that by the claim that the One possesses the intelligibles as not distinct (*mē diakekrimena*), while they are distinct at the second stage.

[53] *Soph*. 216c; 226c; 253d–e.

inner structure.[54] Moreover, it is the same with itself and different from others. And not only are sameness and difference soul's ingredients, they are repeated in the motion of the world soul. The Demiurge moulds two circles out of the mix he has made, one which has the motion of sameness, the other that of difference:

> whenever it touches something that has a scatterable being, and whenever something indivisible, moving throughout itself, it says to whatever it is the same and to whatever different . . . (37a5–b1, cf. 36b5–d8)[55]

Because the world soul both has an activity or motion characterised by sameness and difference and is itself, as it were, mixed out of these, it recognises both things in what it encounters. There is something in the very constitution of souls that makes them capable of recognising sameness and difference.

Importantly, Plotinus agrees with the *Timaeus* not just on the centrality and function of sameness and difference but also on the application of these competencies. Plotinus, too, claims that in the first phase, anyone is said to recognise being, motion and rest by being, motion and rest *in himself*. This recognition involves fitting. One fits, adjust or applies (*epharmozein*) what one encounters to parts or features within oneself.[56] Moreover, it seems that this innate competence is not exclusive to the hypostasis Intellect. First, even though Plotinus is mostly describing the *prōta genē* of the Intellect, just before the lengthy passage of VI.2.8 quoted above, he claims that the thought of *anyone* (*tis*, line 22) has the feature of 'seeing being in virtue of being in himself and the others in virtue of the others, that is, motion in virtue of motion in himself and rest in virtue of rest . . .'[57] At the very least, all individual intellects use the very same notions, the *prōta genē*, in their thinking activity. Second, he goes on to say that the genera 'sameness'

[54] *Ti*. 35a–b. Cf. McCabe 1994: chapter 6. The mixture is far from chaotic: it is governed by mathematical proportions, and hence in a subtle arrangement. For suggestions about the proportions, see Brisson 1994: 314–32; von Perger 1997: 101 ff.

[55] For the cognitive function of world soul in the *Timaeus*, cf. Brisson 1994: 340–52.

[56] VI.2.8.25–31. Another possible reading of this passage says that after recognising for instance motion by the motion in oneself, one fits it to the primary genera of the intelligible. Armstrong actually translates *tauta ekeinois epharmosas* 'fits his own being, rest and motion to those of the Intellect', taking *tauta* to mean 'being, rest and motion in oneself' and *ekeinois* the three primary genera themselves. Although this reading has the merit of not repeating the initial recognition, I believe that Plotinus would have explained a little more carefully this second phase, were it such. Moreover, I take it that each thinker has, in a way, the primary genera in his/her mind, *nous*, because each is a whole thinker like the Intellect itself. Hence the two phases will boil into one.

Tht. 193c uses another variation of the same verb, *prosarmottein*. Plotinus may be deliberately using a different word since what is going on here is not fitting perceptions to memory imprints.

[57] VI.2.8.28–30.

and 'difference' also give 'same' and 'different' to the particulars. Each particular is a particular same and a particular different.[58] For us to grasp the particulars of the sensible realm as particulars, these must have these features, they must participate in these genera. The human mind, in turn, must have some means to recognise these features of the particulars.

Dialectic

Both Plato and Plotinus think that recognition of the relations 'same' and 'different' are intellect's or soul's very constituents. This enables discernment of kinds. It has also been suggested that the individuation of particulars relies on the same notions. I will argue that Plotinus holds that these notions and the competence to which they belong are central not just for *noēsis* but for discursive thought – not just for knowledge but also for belief.

In discussing the method of philosophical inquiry and the efforts that need to be made in order to ascend, Plotinus describes dialectic, the most valuable part of philosophy, as:

> the state of being able to say (*dunamenē hexis eipein*) about each thing with *logos* what it is and how it differs from others, and what is common; and to what kind it belongs, and where in its kind every thing is, and if it is a thing that [truly] exists, and how many are the things that exist, and again the things that do not exist, being different. It discusses good and not good . . . etc. (I.3.4.2–7) using the Platonic method of division (*diairesis*) to distinguish the forms, and to determine the essential nature of things, and the primary kinds, by weaving intellectually things that come from these (*ta ek toutōn noerōs plekousa*) until it has gone through all the intelligible . . . (I.3.4.12–15)

The core of philosophy is to establish what kinds there are, how they differ from others, to what kind they belong and how. This leads to the discernment of things that truly exist, that is, essences and the salient kinds of things, like forms and primary kinds.

The Platonic method of dialectic, expounded in several late dialogues, is either the same or at least closely related to the method of collection and division (*diairesis*, *sunagōgē*; cf. e.g. *Phdr*. 265d–266b; *Soph*. 217a; 253d; *Phlb*. 25d).[59] By and large, this method should enable one to collect things into meaningful kinds and to divide a general idea or kind into subdivisions. Plotinus' passage can be interpreted in two radically different ways: either dialectic refers to a complete understanding of all intelligible relations and

[58] καὶ τι γὰρ ταὐτὸν καί τι ἕτερον ἕκαστον; VI.2.8.41–2.

[59] Plato's dialectic is a difficult and much-discussed issue. I can offer here only some references to this particular question: Gómez-Lobo 1977; McCabe 2000: chapter 7.4.

structures, or it may also signify the less final process which leads into it. The first interpretation is supported, among other things, by the idea that the intelligible structures the method reveals form a whole of interconnected forms, of which it is impossible to know a part without knowing the relations it has to other parts of the system. Knowledge is understood as a holistic system, and to understand any one part of it one needs to understand the whole.[60] This is the point of Intellect's grasp of its objects 'at once' (*athroos*).[61] The less uncompromising reading of dialectic as process gets support from the fact that as a whole, the treatise seems to describe processes that *lead to* knowledge. Moreover, the passage starts from the idea that dialectic is a method of speaking (*eipein*) in a reasoned and orderly way. Thus it is not only the final momentary, non-representational vision of the whole system of forms, but also something that enables well-founded *talk* of essential structures of the universe. The method is designed to yield expert or philosophical information about the intelligibles, but it does so by using everyday concepts, phenomena and perceived kinds, for example.[62] The divisions attained by this method – if successful – correspond to reality, to natural divisions.

The notions 'sameness' and 'difference' seem absolutely central to division and collection, and in fact both Plato and Plotinus connect these notions to dialectic. Plato asserts that the science of dialectic is about dividing things into kinds and avoiding believing that the same form is another or that the other is the same.[63] In the context where the dialectical principles (*archai*) of the soul are said to be provided by the Intellect, Plotinus repeats that one of the dialectical competencies is to recognise whether things are the same or other.[64] Given his double use of 'same' as 'identical' and 'belonging to the same kind' – elaborated in the previous section – Plotinus' declaration can be taken to cover both individuals and kinds: 'This horse belongs to the same species with other horses but it is different from them and identical only with itself.'[65] Sameness and difference are

[60] For the noetic whole as an instantaneous grasp of a whole in Plotinus, cf. Emilsson 2003. I will come back to this holistic nature in the following section.

[61] For this feature, cf. Emilsson 2003.

[62] Furthermore, I am inclined to think that either cognition is, for Plotinus, temporal, representational and incomplete, or a non-temporal 'vision' of the whole system, and that a complete but temporal and discursive cognition, although logically possible, is for Plotinus likely to be practically impossible, and does not seem to have textual support. Emilsson 2003 points out that the Soul of the All may be engaged in this kind of complete discursive thought (III.7.11.54–6). Be that as it may, this does not mean that the human mind could engage in similar activities. Humans differ from the All by being far from complete parts of it.

[63] *Soph*. 253d–e. [64] I.3.5, esp. lines 1–3; 20–1. [65] Cf. Arist. *Top*. 103a6 ff.

not merely features of the realm of ideas or perfect knowledge, but, rather, indispensable principles of central philosophical methods.

By using another Platonic term, weaving, Plotinus recalls explicitly the *Sophist* where Plato asserts that it is the interplay – or what is called weaving together (*sumplokē*) – of forms that makes speech possible, whereas disassociating each thing from everything else would destroy everything there is to say.[66] The interweaving can mean a number of things,[67] but let us here note two issues. First, it seems that (quite to the contrary of the view that ordinary thought has nothing to do with forms) there is apparently an important connection between all speaking and thinking, and forms. Second, thought presupposes that forms have some relation not just to their instantiations but also to each other. This ought to hold especially of the first kinds of sameness and difference, since they are earlier in the dialogue said to 'pervade' every other kind.

Plotinus, too, argued above that dialectic is connected to the understanding of the complex structure of forms and genera of the intelligible realm. His choice of vocabulary suggests that he refers to forms and genera being in some ways interconnected. Dialectic weaves together what 'comes from the forms and the primary genera (*ta ek toutōn*)' (I.3.4.14–15). Weaving would seem to have to do with how the forms, the primary genera as well as 'things coming from them' (either the more unfolded discriminations like *logoi* connected to the lower actualisations of forms, or perhaps even sensibles themselves), are in relation to themselves and to each other. Dialectic reveals the salient kinds and their interconnections.

The relevance of the intelligible genera to discursive thought and to philosophical discussion and progress is brought out by two further points. First, whenever the soul divides something, it makes explicit a division 'already made' in and by the Intellect. Although the Intellect does not *proceed* according to the method of division, it contains the salient divisions. In dividing and unfolding an object, the soul 'concentrates its attention' on these divisions.[68] The core of cognitive activity is *noēsis*, which every attempt to do philosophical dialectic follows, reveals or represents as fully as is possible in the realm of time and matter. Second, Plotinus uses the same

[66] *Soph*. 259e. Plotinus may also refer to the *Statesman* where weaving is used as an example to illustrate the method of collection and division (*Pol*. 278e ff.).

[67] Cornford 1948 took it to mean that every statement or judgement involves the use of at least one form. Ackrill 1955 argued, to my mind convincingly, that what is at issue is rather that there must be fixed concepts which are the meanings of general terms. These ensure the meaningfulness of our speech.

[68] ὅταν ἕν τι διαιρῇ καὶ ἀναπτύσσῃ; ἢ ἐν τῷ νῷ διήρηται; καὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον οἷον ἐναπέρεισις μᾶλλον; IV.4.1.25–6.

Platonic verbs in all contexts. The dialectical discernment (that enables talk) has been referred to by both the verb *diaireō* and *diakrinō*. The former is explicitly used in the short quotation above of soul's activity, while the latter occurs in the descriptions of Intellect's internal activities.[69] The terms would, then, seem to suit similar activities at different cognitive levels. Also, when the Intellect was described as bringing together one group or kind by using the notion sameness, this was called 'collecting' (*sunagein*).[70] Collecting, as we shall soon see, is further mentioned in the context of what could be called ordinary concept formation. In sum, the competences the Intellect has are not exclusive to it. They belong to the capacities of soul's reasoning power and are used even for its grasp of perceptions.

Recall the *Theaetetus*, where the notions of 'being', 'likeness', 'same' and their opposites are said to be things that cannot be found in the sense perceptions themselves. They are things which the soul investigates by or through itself, or 'reaches out after by itself'.[71] Perception, Plotinus agrees, is insufficient for connecting perceptions and appearances with one another, and therefore neither capable of concept-formation, nor of judgements which require the use of several appearances. There is a subject, the rational soul, over and above the senses, capable of comparing and judging different kinds of perceptual objects.[72] This subject is endowed with powers or competencies from the Intellect.

'Concept-formation' and recollection

In the course of this book, it has several times been noted that a central difference exists between embodied and higher self, and between discursive thinking in time and the non-discursive intellectual vision, such that discursive reason functions through a mediation of words, concepts[73] and other (re)presentations, while the intellect is what it thinks, and the forms are what the concepts are supposed to be concepts of. Concepts present an intermediary which needs to explain both of the following two aspects. In order for concepts to help the human mind in its striving to grasp the essential structure of the universe, the concepts it uses ought to have a meaningful

[69] VI.7.39.7. [70] VI.2.8.34–8; cf. IV.3.32.20. [71] Esp. *Tht.* 186a.

[72] For all the steps of the argument in the context of the *Theaetetus*, see Burnyeat 1990: esp. 52–61.

[73] The word often translated as a concept is *noēma*. In the Neoplatonic context, the term is sometimes problematic. The word can refer to a representation or likeness of a form in the use of discursive reason, and thereby something we would call a concept, but sometimes it is connected to the functioning of the intellect which does not use any mediating items. For *noēmata* in discursive reason's functioning, e.g. V.3.3.35–6; cf. e.g. Gerson 1999: 75; for universal concepts, Sorabji forthcoming 2005: 3 g 4–13; 5 b.

relation to the forms. Since, however, there are concepts of things that do not exist, and even the concepts which do capture existing things are often misleading and not based on true knowledge of the object they represent, concepts cannot be simply truthful likenesses of forms.[74] A theory of concepts and other representations should allow both cognitive achievement and failure. In Plotinus, this is connected to the more general dilemma with which the chapter started, that of the relation between discursive thought which deals with perceptions and noetic contemplation of forms. Even though the two would share functional similarities like the competences of recognising similarities and differences, a question remains whether their *contents* resemble one another at all.

One perhaps obvious point in favour of the connectedness of contents concerns the relation between the objects of perception and contemplation. Since the sensible realm is an imperfect image of the intelligible, the sensibles cannot be altogether disassociated and different from the intelligibles. The realm of matter displays, albeit imperfectly, the beauty of the intelligible order. Intellect's role in the creation of the order of the universe secures an ontological connection. Yet the fact that it is so hard for the human soul to arrive at knowledge suggests that the Platonists are deeply suspicious about how far one can proceed by mere perceptions. As was argued in the first chapter, the material and temporal divisibility of the sensible objects renders them, in the end, untrustworthy companions. Nonetheless, reasoning builds a bridge from perceptions to their intelligible origin. Let us follow this path.

The powers of discursive reason used together with perception are described as having the following four aspects:

(1) 'Perception sees a man and gives the image (*tupos*) to [discursive] reason. What does it say? It does not speak anything yet, but just recognises and stops [there] (*egnō monon kai estē*)' (V.3.3.1–3). In perception, the perceptive faculty (together with *phantasia*) gives reason an image of a human being. Reason, while being silent, nonetheless knows or recognises what is perceived. Either it simply acquires an instance of the form of man, just like the perception acquired it, or, as the passage seems to suggest, it knows it is a man, and therefore recognises it *as an instance of the form of man*. It must distinguish the approaching object as the same kind of thing as the men it has perceived before, and different from the horses it just saw passing. It must already have some concept of a human being, whether it be the appearance of the form of man

[74] This is pointed out in the context of Plato by Gerson 1999: 64–9.

or at least a memory-imprint or concept formed by perceiving several human beings.[75]

(2) Reason can ask itself who the human is, and if it has met the person earlier, with the help of memory it recognises him as someone, for example as Socrates (V.3.3.4). This would seem to require that reason recognises the approaching person as the *same* Socrates it has seen before, and different, for instance, from Callias.

(3) It can 'unfold' the image it has received, that is, make the details of his/her form explicit, 'taking to parts what the appearance gave it' (V.3.3.5–6). Perception of some one whole which is complex is, according to Plotinus, one perception. In perceiving a face, for instance, there is not one perception of nose and another of the eyes but of a whole face (IV.7.6.1–10). Reason, unlike perception, can differentiate this image into parts.[76] In this too, it is useful to have some general acquaintance of human beings, of the features they all share. Reason can distinguish feet from arms by using its memory imprints of several human beings, all of which have *different* kind of extensions on the upper part of the body from the ones in the lower part. It knows that the thing in the middle is nose, that very *same* kind of thing in the middle of all human faces.

(4) Reason can recognise the goodness in the person by the goodness in itself. This is said to involve both what reason found out by perception and something that it had already in itself as a norm of the good (V.3.3.6–11). In this recognition, the laws from the intelligible and perception work together, but as it is a case different from the other three and not directly relevant to the topic at hand, I will not pursue this further.[77]

What is significant for our purposes is that the activities of reason, which as it were analyse and process empirical information, seem to rely on the notions of sameness and difference. Admittedly, the genera are not

[75] Here my reading differs from that of Emilsson 1988: 123. In general, I may be inclined to emphasise the role of reason more than he is. However, I feel the force of his point that reason seems to be engaged in *epikrinein/epikrisis*, whereas perceptions are called *kriseis*. As we have seen, both the Intellect and discursive reason also *diakrinein*. Perhaps perception does have some powers with which to make preliminary judgements, whereas reason is primarily engaged in more complex ones, but I doubt whether perception wholly independently of reason would have any power of true judgement. Cf. I.1.7.9–14; IV.9.3.26.

[76] According to one reading, Aristotle holds in the *De an*. that the deliberative process involves the manipulation of appearances and the construction of one appearance out of many: 431b6–8; 434a7–12.

[77] Håvard Løkke reminded me of the Stoic view that virtues are corporeal and thus perceptible. It is thus possible that Plotinus is referring to a Stoic discussion here but insisting that reason must have a role to play in recognition of goodness.

mentioned in the very passage, but as the passage follows the claim that reason *collects and divides* images it has acquired through perception (*sunagon kai diairoun* at V.3.2.9), the above interpretation seems legitimate. Through the use of the innate competencies reason can make sense of perceptions, it can make generalisations and comparisons. This way it can come to an understanding of some whole recurring structure which is, for instance, the species 'human being'.

This brings us already close to the question of the apprehension of essences. In the same context Plotinus claims that when the discursive reason deals with likenesses of the intelligible entities, of forms, it uses the same power (*dunamis*) to collect and divide in dealing with them.[78] The process in which, apparently, appearances both of forms and of sensible things are used together is quite surprisingly called recollection:

> And it gains understanding, as it were, recognising and fitting (*epigignōskon*) the new and recently arrived impressions to the old impressions (*tupois*) within it. And this [process], we may say, are the recollections (*anamnēseis*) of the soul. (V.3.2.11–14)

According to L. P. Gerson, the soul has no independent access to forms. All impressions have arrived through sense perception, and the concepts the soul uses are – at least in so far as they do not correctly refer to the forms – based on them. On his view, the 'old impressions' are not representations of forms in any special sense but something like concepts formed by combining several perceptions of the same kinds of things.[79] Gerson has also pointed out that impressions may be harmonised with one another, whereas an impression and its paradigm, the form, cannot be harmonised with each other.[80] If the verb '*epharmottō*'[81] is understood as *harmonising*, in the sense of adjusting the old beliefs according to newly arrived impressions, it certainly seems that forms cannot be involved. Harmonising merely old and new perceptual impressions could involve dispensing with the impressions that do not fit into the harmony of the rest. This is

[78] V.3.2.10–11. Cf. also I.3.6.2–4. This is along the lines suggested by Plato in the *Timaeus*, where Timaeus distinguishes understanding (*nous*) and knowledge (*epistēmē*) from 'firm and true opinions (*doxa*) and convictions (*pisteis*)' but claims also that the soul functions in the same way regardless of whether it encounters intelligible or sensible things (37b–c; cf. 51d). The different results, knowledge and belief, depend largely on the objects encountered. Frede 1996: 45–9. Dillon 1988: 336–7: in our minds is implanted a receptivity to the manifestation of form in sense-objects.

[79] Gerson 1994: esp. 180.

[80] Gerson 1999: 74.

[81] Note that the verb *prosarmottein* is used in *Tht.* 193c of fitting perceptions to memory imprints in the wax block. For the imprints to function as models to which perceptions are fitted, they should presumably not be affected by them every time. (Of course, the analogy has its drawbacks.)

impossible with the eternal and stable forms which are in a perfect, fixed order of interconnections.

Gerson's interpretation has several appealing features. It is true that Plotinus is explicit that in the human endeavour to ascend, it is possible to use instances of forms as displayed in sense perception and the realm of extension as a useful starting point.[82] More importantly, on Gerson's view recollection is not a mystical vision of universals which has no clear connection to reasoning and philosophising. Quite to the contrary, there are only the capacities of perception and discursive reason to acquire instances of forms and to combine concepts out of appearances. My contribution on sameness and difference would conveniently explain some of these competencies.

Without an amendment, this interpretation does not do final justice to the passage as well as to Plotinus' view of *phantasia*. Let me suggest a slightly different interpretation, which has the additional benefit of securing not merely an ontological but also a cognitive bridge between concepts that rely on perceptions and forms. 'Recollections of the soul' can very well mean something like concepts that have gone through quite a lot of correction and revision, and which thereby already, correctly, display what is essential in a form. If Plotinus' choice to call them recollections is taken seriously, forms should in some way be involved. After all, *anamnēseis* are elsewhere mentioned in the context of the Intellect.[83] Similarly, *epharmottō* was used to denote Intellect's fitting what it encounters to sameness and difference in itself,[84] and therefore the verb need not signify any harmonising in which that *to* which something is fitted goes through any alteration or change.[85]

The picture is complicated by Plotinus' view that there is a *phantasia* that one might term 'higher'.[86] Although the higher *phantasia* – connected perhaps to the individual soul rather than the one administering the functions of the composite – does seem to have 'higher' appearances, Plotinus rejects the view that the two faculties would be different by simply having

[82] V.3.9.30–3. [83] V.9.5.32. [84] At VI.2.8.30–1.

[85] Gerson appeals to IV.4.23.10–11 in which intelligible line and intelligible fire are said not to assimilate to the sensible ones. The passage is somewhat obscure, and it is not evident what Plotinus contends in it. In any case, harmonising seems to be asymmetrical; what arrives is always harmonised, or – to be more accurate – fitted to what there already is in the soul or in the Intellect. In our passage the new impressions are harmonised with the old, made in accordance with them. My interpretation could be strengthened by another passage, where Plotinus uses the same verb of the soul's fitting of impressions into accord with the true realities of which they are impressions. The passage (I.2.4.19–29) is about recollecting virtues, but it is explicitly stated in the end that all other knowledge works in ways similar to this. The soul has all knowledge, but not all of it is active. If the forms of virtues, for instance, are to be 'illuminated', soul must bring the impressions it has of them into accord with the true realities of which they are impressions (δεῖ οὖν τὸν τύπον τοῖς ἀληθινοῖς, ὧν καὶ οἱ τύποι, ἐφαρμόσαι).

[86] IV.3.31.

different kinds of objects, that is, that the one would deal with forms, and the other with perceptions. The two must have something to do with one another, for otherwise there would be two living beings with nothing in common. This suggests that at least one of the *phantasiai* could have both kinds of objects. He emphasises, further, that the two levels of *phantasia* are not wholly distinct because it is possible for the embodied *phantasia* to work in accordance with, or synchronously with, the higher *phantasia*. For the self to be a single awareness and thinker, the two *phantasiai* must be in collaboration with one another. Otherwise there could be two selves in one mind. Ideally they are not separated but in tune (IV.3.31.3–10, esp. lines 9–10).

As belonging to the higher and rational self, the higher *phantasia* could well, however, be more concentrated on dealing with appearances of forms. They could be used to bring the concepts formed by the composite closer to true essences by providing a stable, more systematic basis with which the sense perceptions can be fitted, that is, correlated.[87] When the two faculties are in tune, the lower one functions in close collaboration with the higher one. Sameness would explain the ability to recognise kinds, and the appearances of forms in the higher *phantasia* would explain the human ability to recognise the difference between essences and other kinds, other concepts. Innate appearances of forms secure that we do not come to think of the group of large-nosed things as being a salient kind. By the capacities of sameness and differences, the perceptual appearances trigger appearances of forms that fit them. Something like this could be at the bottom of Plotinus' conviction that the soul is akin to the higher realm and its objects of knowledge, and therefore capable of approaching them, as well as his claim that discursive reason engages in the act of intelligising through concepts (V.3.3.35–6; cf. V.1.1.30–5).

Having appearances like this need not signify that the mind has any easy shortcut to forms. Like recollection in Plato, it can be a difficult process and require much dialectical exercise. The innate notions of forms the mind has must be uncovered. The collaboration between the two *phantasiai* is not a simple natural fact, but a potential of the human mind that it can and ought to actualise. Only by hard philosophical work does the soul achieve knowledge.

[87] Strange 1994: 27 points out that the Stoic common conceptions were interpreted by Middle Platonists as the objects of recollection, and may have been so also by Plotinus. Phillips 1987 distinguishes two kinds of recollection, that of imprints and that of ideas (cf. I.2.4.18–25). I am inclined to think that there is only one kind of recollection that has to do with clarifying appearances and concepts towards a correspondence with forms, and this begins by bringing the two kinds of *phantasia* into accordance with one another.

Revising one's appearances is made possible by the competencies, like the ability to engage in dialectic, with which the Intellect endows the soul. 'The Intellect gives clear principles to any soul which will take them. It then combines, interweaves and divides until it has arrived at perfect intellect' (I.3.5.1–4). If the above interpretation is correct, the human mind has also an innate competence to discover essences rather than just any meaningless recurrences in the universe. Even though incapable of direct access to forms, by doing philosophical dialectic, discursive reasoning can rise to a more systematic level in which it already approaches the forms and essences. The use of these competencies, however, depends on soul's attention and effort to 'receive' them, to actualise them.

I have argued that Plotinus makes the same kind of structural remarks about both discursive reasoning and *noēsis*. I have also argued that the Intellect endows discursive reason with competencies very much like the ones it itself has. Among these are the competencies to distinguish and to recognise particulars and kinds as well as to understand the interconnections of the salient kinds. Dialectical method is a device for proceeding from a muddled understanding of the universe to a systematic one. This does not need to imply that noetic thought and discursive thinking would collapse into one. Much remains that is different in them, and Intellect's own activity does not *need* all Platonic methods of philosophy because it *explains* them. Where our mental life involves many kinds of incompletenesses, the Intellect is complete as thought, as a plurality in one. The Intellect lies at the very centre of our being, but it cannot be simply identified with ourselves. The embodied self is first and foremost one's capacity for discursive reasoning (V.3.3.31–45), but its competencies are derived from the Intellect and from its own particular intellect. Philosophy leads the self towards knowledge, towards the full actualisation of the self's rational competencies – its normative end.

Structure, order and harmony

We have seen that philosophy starts by dialectically revealing the salient features of the complex universe. This process involves perceptions, but it leads to intelligible entities, the forms, or at least correctly formed concepts of them. It has also been suggested that the understanding of interconnections, relations and structure is an important part both in acquiring knowledge as well as in knowledge itself. I wish to conclude the section on rational competences by emphasising the role of structure

and systematicity in knowledge, for this has great significance for the self.

In order for the human soul to proceed from perceptions and empirically acquired concepts and beliefs to systematic understanding of the world, and, moreover, to true essences and forms, in the ways I have suggested, the two realms must be in significant ways related. In the first chapter, I argued for the prominent role of *logoi*, forming principles, in Plotinus. In this context, I will bring to the fore only the idea that one of their primary functions is to form unitary wholes out of uninformed and undefined matter. As pointed out in the first chapter, the forms are responsible for structuring ordered wholes out of parts:

> The form (*to eidos*), approaching that which will come to be of many parts, put them together into what is one by ordered combination and it brought them into one union and made them one by agreement [of the parts] (*en tē homologia*) . . . In this way the beautiful body comes to be by association with the forming principle (*logos*) which comes from the divine [forms]. (I.6.2.18–20; 27–8)

Any beauty in the sensible, Plotinus repeatedly argues, is due to imitating form(s). The ordered combinations get their order and unity from the forming principles of the forms. Importantly, the quotation comes from a context in which Plotinus is describing how the soul understands or recognises beauty in the sensible realm. Sensible beauty itself is too complicated an issue to be dealt with here, but two important background assumptions seem evident.

First, recognising beauty depends on recognising the unity and structure given to sensible items by forming principles.[88] Unity and beauty are perceived and understood by an act where sense perception perceives the whole and gives this impression to the inner parts of the soul. Second, the soul has an innate competence to realise the unity and structure in the sensible. The soul is capable of recognising unity and beauty because it is 'fitting and dear' to them. The reasoning part of the soul has the law or trace of beauty within it.[89] This may certainly involve more than seeing the order in the object, but apprehension of the structured unity derived from the formal power seems to be significant for it. Similarly, when dialectic mirrors and explains the structure and order there is in the universe, this structure is due to intelligible principles, to the *logoi* in nature in which nothing is random but unified in structure. Everything consists of wholes whose differentiated parts compose an ordered structure.[90] Dialectic, as we have seen, is possible

[88] For beauty and Plotinus' aesthetics in general, cf. Kuisma 2003; for the role of forms, parts and wholes and their derivative character in the sensible realm, esp. 65–73.
[89] I.6.3.6–15. [90] VI.7.14.

because of our innate human dispositions to understand and analyse that order.

It can, however, still be pointed out that Plotinus explicitly denies that terminology which refers to the realm of time and extension would be suitable in describing the intelligible. While, for example, a perceptible house participates in arrangement and order (*taxis, kosmos*), the formative principle in itself has no arrangement, order or proportion (*summetria*). The principles of the intelligible realm have no need of concord (*homologia*), order or arrangement even if they create them in the sensible. Therefore the gap between the intelligible and sensible realm may be much deeper, and not just a difference in the level of perfection.[91]

However, as we have seen, Intellect's vision of the One does involve discriminations and, indeed, meaningful groupings. Plotinus is also ready to use the term *harmonia* of both the sensible and the intelligible. And yet even that term draws its basic meaning from building activity, from placing or arranging pieces to form a whole.[92] He further maintains that even though there is no material separation in the intelligible, there is an 'other kind' of separation and priority.[93] Purified from the spatial undertones, something 'orderly', that is, non-random, nonetheless remains.

This order is composed of parts which all have their own functions. Plotinus likens the Intellect to individual souls or intellects using Platonic virtues of the soul:

> The Intellect, then, is the [real] beings/substances (*ta onta*), possessing them all in itself not as if in a place, but possessing itself and being one with them. All things are together there, and none the less they are separate. For even soul has together in itself many kinds of knowledge (*epistēmē*) without containing any confusion, and *each does its own work*, when needed, without drawing the others along with it, and each thought in its actualisation is pure from the thoughts that remain within. In this way, and much more than this, Intellect is all things together and also not together, because each is its own potentiality/power (*dunamis idia*). (V.9.6.1–9)

Platonic justice of soul and city is used to explain how Intellect is, like soul, both one and many without any contradiction.[94] Note that Plotinus operates sometimes with two kinds of knowledge (*epistēmē*): one, as in above, in the soul, and connected, hence, to a discursive thinking and knowing. This

[91] I.2.1.43–8.

[92] Cf. e.g. I.3.1.32; II.9.16.40; VI.7.6.3–5. *Harmonia* is used in connection with building ships and masonry, having, hence, a meaning within the context of spatial extensions. It refers sometimes especially to the fittings in between pieces. *Od.* 5.248, 361; Hdt. 2.96; D. S. 2.8.2; Paus. 8.8.8. (This was initially brought to my attention by Holger Thesleff.) The word is also common, for instance, in both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* (*Resp*. 397b; 398d; 399e; 430e; 443c–e; 519e; *Ti*. συναρμόττω, 35a; μέσον μέσῃ συναγαγὼν προσήρμοττεν, 36e; and 36e–37a).

[93] IV.4.16.9–12.

[94] Cf. e.g. *Resp*. 433a: τὰ αὑτοῦ πράττειν.

is knowledge in a familiar sense of the word, connected to human efforts at understanding the world and clarifying conceptions about the world. For Plotinus, this activity mirrors a perfect, true knowledge (*alēthinē epistēmē* at VI.6.6.30) which coincides with the noetic contemplation of the *nous*, and not merely involves but is the substances. Rather than emphasising knowledge as, for instance, justified true belief, Plotinus links both his kinds of knowledge with systematic interconnections. In true knowledge, too, order is a feature of a unified whole. If all objects of knowledge do their own work and none of them is entangled with the duties of another, the whole is capable of well-organised function. It succeeds in being a coherent whole even when it has many parts. This would seem to apply both to soul and its functioning as well as to the higher cognitive state of the intellect.

The order in question has to do with at least two things: (1) necessary interconnectedness of forms, argued for in the first chapter as well as the previous sections of this chapter;[95] (2) parts and wholes. Plotinus' view throughout is that to understand a part is to understand it in the context of the whole it belongs to. This applies equally to parts of living beings governed by the above-mentioned *logoi* as to parts of the universe.[96] In some ways, forms have to be referred to in order to explain why the nose in the animal face is in the middle, where and why animals have feet, etc. To truly understand the notion 'hand' requires that one understands the notion 'human being' and one who really *knows* what a human being is, would know that such things usually have hands. This is their intelligibility.[97] Dialectic strives to understand each entity and kind within this structure, by clarifying the place that each thing has in the whole.[98] If someone had, for instance, the concept of a horse but placed it in the group of artefacts, it is questionable in what sense he knew the essence of 'horse' at all (or how his concept of artefacts was supposed to work). Also, once he gained more information on artefacts and/or horses, his beliefs could not cohere, and he would be likely to reconsider the place of 'horse' in his system.

Knowledge is special precisely because it takes into consideration the whole to which the part integrally belongs. Plotinus requires that knowledge is never of any one part in isolation:

[95] As was mentioned in chapter 1.2, Gerson 1994: 48–51 argues that the Intellect is a complex whole of forms in certain interconnections. Eternal connections of forms guarantee the truth of the claims like, e.g., x is f entails that x is g (i.e. that F-ness and G-ness must have an eternal connection within the Intellect).

[96] E.g. III.2.3.9–13. For parts and structured wholes in Platonism, cf. Harte 1994; 2002, who argues that the identity of the parts of Platonic wholes is determined only in the context of the whole they compose.

[97] This, too, was argued in chapter 1.2. [98] I.3.4.4–5.

There all the parts are in a way actual at once; each is ready if you wish to make use [of it]; the readiness is in the part but it acquires power, as it were, approaching the whole. One must not think of it isolated from other thoughts; if one does, it will no longer be according to skill or knowledge (*ouketi technikon oude epistēmonikon*), but just as a child[99] would say [it]. (IV.9.5.16–21)

The intelligible differs from dialectical thought activity not because it is just simple but because every part is actual 'at once'. Every intelligible is 'at all times' understood as itself and in the context of the complete whole.[100] True knowledge is not the correspondence of thoughts to substances but the actuality of the whole of the substances.

The Intellect itself, it must be conceded, is not a list or a picture of these connections and structures, because it is beyond space, time and all kinds of representations. It *is*, rather, a set of differences and possibilities that become actualised. Plotinus is himself in difficulties in describing the connections and the structure of a realm which has no spatiality or extension, nor sequences in time, and is thus non-propositional. After asserting that in the intelligible there are only things that are according to nature and that there is eternity instead of time, he does not claim what could be expected, namely that there is no place in the intelligible at all, but that place exists 'intellectually' (*noerōs*; V.9.10.9 ff.). This is described as a presence of one thing in another (*to allo en allō*). The intelligibles are entities that differ from one another and that have a certain 'place' or function in the intelligible. They are in a certain order in the context of each other and the whole.

So even if the intelligible realm does not have structure in the same sense as the extended realm has, it is possible to posit 'structure[I]'. By structure[I] is here meant simply this: the collection of the thoughts of the Intellect is not a haphazard set. It consists not just of the forms but also of its own laws about which forms are interconnected and in which ways. These relations may be internal to the forms themselves, and not something, as it were, in between them, but it is important to recognise that the intelligible determines which properties the forms can instantiate in the sensible and in which combinations, and that its own thinking includes at least some essential differences and interconnections.

The manifold of the thoughts of the Intellect belongs to the same structured[I] unity in a higher, non-extended and non-discursive way. Its

[99] παῖς may mean child or a slave. This may refer either to the way children learn things without yet realising all their connections, but it may also be an allusion to the *Meno* where the slave boy is recollecting but aided heavily by Socrates. After the experiment he can hardly be said to know much about geometry or mathematics, only the isolated thing he has just been taught.

[100] ἐκεῖ δὲ φανὰ πάντα καὶ ἕκαστον; IV.9.5.27–8.

unity is its perfect interconnectedness and structure. *If* it did not already fully know all its objects of thought and their possible interconnections, it *could* make these explicit. It just has no need of doing so. Since the Intellect cognises all possible thoughts non-discursively, it recognises the salient overall structure[I] 'at all times'. It sees, as it were, the structure of the face wholly, without needing to construct explicit sentences like 'the nose is in the middle'. From a phenomenal perspective it could be likened to a momentary vision of the unified whole (although it must be remembered that it is unlike both vision and discursive thought in lacking intentional structure).[101]

In the soul, the laws, powers and structure[I] of the Intellect are unfolded to discursive thought, which has structure now in the more familiar sense of the word: there are words, concepts and propositions in meaningful connections with one another. What is achieved by a soul must, nonetheless, remain less than perfect: a soul is an entity struggling against the necessities of time and matter. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is dependent on the external realm and therefore vulnerable to intermissions and delusions. Furthermore, a soul cannot have direct access to its objects of knowledge, the forms. Its relation to its objects is always mediated and therefore liable to error and failure. Plotinus very likely also believed that even if there were no intermissions in discursive thinking and the appearances were clear and truthful to the objects they represent, discursive reason could not possibly gain all of knowledge at once, and therefore it is from the very start deficient in comparison to the intellect.

Our outlook on the world consists of several thoughts and memories that we have had, some of which we continue to entertain in a certain complex structure. For that structure to tell something true about the rationally ordered universe, it has to be related both to forms and to the intelligible structure. Plotinus points out the problem that if order and coherence within one's thoughts were the only requirement for knowledge, there could be a structured and consistent set of false beliefs. Agreement and harmony can exist between bad ideas.[102] Coherence and a mere systematicity of dialectic cannot suffice as a criterion for, or a way to, truth. But neither can mere existence of separate forms secure knowledge because by its very nature knowledge is complex. Knowing something requires the understanding of the whole that something is a part of as well as its salient connections to other things. Systematic thought involves *true beliefs in the right kind of relations* with each other. The harmony or structure that Plotinus is after imitates the intelligible both by its structure and by the items within

[101] Emilsson 2003. [102] *Homologia, sumphōnia*; I.6.1.41–7; cf. *Resp*. 533c.

it.[103] As a structured and ordered unity-in-multiplicity, the Intellect stands for a complete and perfectly coherent set of beliefs. The tendency of the discursive reason to reflect the 'laws' and structures of the Intellect secures that despite the unreliability of the surface beliefs, our deepest beliefs have a tendency towards truth.[104]

The strongest and most characteristic methodological exhortation of Plotinus is, famously, to turn inside, to withdraw within: 'Let him who can follow and come within . . .' (*eis to eisō*; I.6.8.3–4). Now one may ask, what good does such a turn accomplish? What does the inner sight see? The turn inwards reveals the self as an intelligent being. It illuminates the self's true nature as rational and intellectual. First, the self is not just a passive set of beliefs, nor is the ideal self just a collection of forms. Reason is first and foremost the competence to discern individuals and kinds, to recognise the salient recurring features of the universe – that is, to penetrate its rational order. The order behind the sensible realm of change and apparent chaos is not evident to perception. At the core of every agent, of every self, is the power to organise perceptual input into an intelligible and unified view of the world. Second, as our mind reflects the intelligible world-order more and more accurately, so it also gradually gains internal coherence, order and beauty. The self transforms from a state of chaos, internal discord and division into a divinely unified and stable rational agent. This gradual self-realisation integrates the agent into one, coherent thinker. Third, in an ideal case, the coherent thinker is in control of the whole essential order of the universe, of a whole system of knowledge. This makes it complete and self-sufficient. There is no important question to which such a self would not know the answer, and all its decisions and acts are backed up by a whole body of knowledge rather than by partial and incomplete understanding of the issues in question. This possession makes it independent and self-sufficient as a rational subject and agent.[105]

[103] Fine 1990 has made the controversial claim that even in the *Republic*, Plato is not a foundationalist but a coherentist about justification. Beliefs and knowledge do not differ from each other in respect of objects but in respect of explanation and structure. Knowledge is about adequate coherence and interconnectedness, not about vision or certainty. This diminishes the divide between believing and knowing. The famous allegory of the Cave, for example, is an allegory of how to move from a lower to a higher cognitive condition. Now regardless of whether her radical interpretation of the *Republic* is true, and despite a perhaps reckless usage of the terminology of present-day epistemology, in the late dialogues structure and interconnectedness do become more prominent (cf. Fine 1979). It has also been recently argued (McCabe 2000) that Plato shifts from something like foundationalism to something like holism.

[104] I am now using the notions of 'surface' and 'deep' in the manner McCabe uses them in 2000: 58 and note 61, and thus differently from the above overt–covert distinction of Vlastos 1983.

[105] The importance of this kind of self-sufficiency is perhaps more evident in Plato; cf. McCabe 2000: chapter 8; Woolf 1997.

The regulative ideals of selfhood revealed by the ideal isomorphism of world and soul are, hence, rationality, coherence, stability and self-sufficiency. At bottom, Plotinus' rational self is one strong expression of the tradition that values self-consistency: People like to think of themselves as having internally established traits that remain and should remain the same across different social contexts. Opposed to cultures and eras where selves are or have been flexibly defined with reference to particular social settings, the tradition stemming from Socrates holds dear internal consistency both at a time and through time, and in general the stability of character that can be achieved by rational coherence.[106] Consistency and rational coherence also contribute to independence. These ensure that the agent does not rely, to the same extent, on external advice and untested beliefs in planning his life and making decisions. In Plotinus' version, unity, consistency and self-sufficiency coincide with rather strictly defined and idealised knowledge. Acquisition of this knowledge becomes thus indispensable also for therapeutic purposes, for integration and self-identification.

I hope also to have shown that the intellect is the true self not only in the sense of being a normative ideal. It is the source, and as such explanatory, of the cognitive competencies of the normal, embodied self. The two-level account of selfhood is not, thus, of two different and altogether discontinuous selves, with only one of which we can at any one time identify ourselves. True enough, a successful self-identification as an intellect will force the embodied selfhood to the background – as we shall soon see, to a status of a kind of autonomously functioning necessary evil – whereas the reverse is not the case. But the undeniable cognitive and normative discontinuities between the two are mediated by the fact that the embodied selfhood relies for its existence and competences on the inner and higher self at all times. It is an unfolding and a likeness of the higher self, and therefore the two selves can be treated as different aspects of one and the same thing.

3.2. SELF-KNOWLEDGE OF THE THINKING THING

In the introduction, the rationale and scope of this book were determined with the help of Plotinus' question 'Who are we?' By its structure, this question is, broadly speaking, reflexive. The inquiring gaze is turned towards the inquirer himself.[107] It is now time to follow this turn, and to raise questions about self-knowledge. What or who is the object of self-inquiry and self-knowledge? Does and can the epistemic subject relate to itself as it relates to its ordinary objects of knowledge?

[106] For differences in present evaluations of self, cf. Neisser and Jopling 1997: especially the introduction.
[107] I. 1.13.1–3.

We have already been introduced to several candidates for 'self'. Plotinus thinks that his 'we' or self (*hēmeis, autos*) can refer both to the embodied and worldly composite as well as to pure rational soul. In the last section, we have seen that rationality can also be divided into two parts, into the perfect paradigm and thereby the truest self, *nous*, as well as into its temporal and erring counterpart, discursive reasoning, *dianoia*, residing in the composite. Gaining a reliable cognitive contact with entities as different as these is a complex issue. The emphasis of this section will be on the two kinds of rational subjects rather than on the embodied self. The embodied composite's most immediate relation to itself is one of self-awareness rather than self-*knowledge*, and was discussed in chapter 2.1. The special challenges its temporal nature poses have also been noted.[108] What remains to be examined is the relation that the rational and epistemic subject has to itself. This inquiry will proceed, again, from ideal and perfect rationality to self-relation of the fallible or erring reason. Since the metaphysically primary and ideal turn (*epistrophē*) towards oneself is accomplished by the Intellect, the structure of this turn will occupy a central role in the inquiry. Again, intellect's functions will turn out to be indicative also of human cognition. But before we take a closer look at the relevant texts, let us familiarise ourselves with the central questions involved.

Plotinus taught that in pure or ideal knowledge, the thinker and the objects of thought are both one and two: the distinction between the subject of thinking and the objects can be made, even though they are somehow both a unity and in identity with each other.[109] Despite the distance (argued for in the previous chapter) one of the first kinds, 'difference', creates between the epistemic subject and its intelligible objects, the two are in some sense identical. Numerous studies have been written on the peculiarity of treating them as a unity again. It is usually agreed that an important motivation for the identity claim is to argue for the infallibility of knowledge. The Intellect's relation to its objects is immediate (*autothen*), it has no intermediaries. Intellect is what it thinks.[110] According to a plausible suggestion, this is knowing, as it were, from an internal point of view, from the point of view of the internal activity of the known.[111] The epistemic subject's disposition to be or become the intelligible objects secures its knowledge. Whatever we take the identity relation to be, it is something that excludes any ordinary directedness towards objects, or, as

[108] Chapters 1.1; 2.2. [109] I.8.2.15–17; III.9.1.12–20; V.4.2.10–12, 44–8. Cf. Sorabji 2005: vol. 1, 3(k).
[110] E.g. V.4.2.46–8; 5.1.9–10; V.9.5.4–8; 12–28. 'Intellect's thinking is not true because it conforms to or corresponds to the ideas; it is true because it is the ideas, which are its thoughts.' Emilsson 1995: 29.
[111] Emilsson forthcoming a, chapter 2.

some scholars argue, any 'aboutness', that is, intentionality, if this is expected to be a relation to objects that are external or other than the subject directed to them.[112] Knowledge is, rather, a peculiar form of self-intellection or self-thinking.

The Aristotelian background of the doctrine has been duly acknowledged. Aristotle holds that knowledge is identical with the object known. In thinking about an object in the world, the intelligibility of the form becomes actualised in one's mind. The same form is thus present both in the world and in the soul, but in a different mode.[113] Furthermore, the Neoplatonists build on the distinction between potential and actual. In the *Theaetetus* 197b(–200d), 'the having of knowledge' is differentiated from 'the possession of knowledge' (*to echein* vs. *to kektēsthai*, 'having acquired'). It is possible to 'learn' again the same thing that one learned long ago, that is, one can possess knowledge of a thing without having it at hand. Aristotle reformulates broadly the same difference in the *De anima* as that between potential and actual.[114] Knowing something only potentially, that is, not using what one knows or not engaging in the activity is mere 'possessing' knowledge, different from 'having' it in the sense of actually using it. According to Aristotle, the act of thinking is identical with the *actualised* form.[115] Another background is the *noēsis noēseōs* of Aristotle's God. In *Metaphysics* (1074b33–5) God is said to become the same as its intelligible objects. In this case, there is no potential knowledge, only actual. God's complete self-reflexivity is direct self-knowledge.[116] Similarly, Plotinus' Intellect is fully actual knowing – full having and not mere possession (e.g. V.3.5.32 ff.). Its knowing that it knows is based on this perfect actualisation and the absence of distance between the knower and its object.[117]

Self-intellection raises immediate concerns. How does Plotinus accommodate the identity of the subject and object with the distance created between them by difference? What motivates Plotinus in arguing for these

[112] Rappe 1997; Sorabji 2001.

[113] *De an.* 431b20–432a3; *Met.* 1072b18–24. In teaching and learning, for instance, there is only one activity taking place, although teaching and learning are not of identical essence. Numerically, there is, however, only one activity. *Ph.* 202a21–b23. Cf. Sorabji 1983: on Arist. 144–6; on Plot. e.g. 153; Sorabji 2005: vol. 1, 3(k).

[114] *De an.* 429b5–9; 430a19–20; 431a1–2; b17. Gerson 1997a: 10.

[115] Sorabji 1983: 146. It has also been suggested that Plotinus' theory is an answer to a Sceptic challenge: Crystal 1998; Emilsson 1995: 38.

[116] Gerson 1997a: 8–9; Menn 2001; 235–6.

[117] G. P. J. O'Daly notes that the key to the bridging of subject and object is the fact that the Intellect is an *energeia*. O'Daly 1973: 77. Gerson 1997a: 7 points out that this understanding of knowledge implies that possession is always derived from having, and hence self-reflexivity is a primary instance of cognition.

two seemingly incompatible ideas? Does the epistemic subject's identity with the intelligibles include a knowledge of that very act of knowing? And, finally, in which sense is this self-intellection *self*-knowledge?

'Knowing that one knows' can be analysed into either one or two mental acts. On one view, the epistemic subject knows its objects, and in addition to this it has a distinct mental act of being aware of this knowledge. Usually, this kind of separate self-consciousness of one's own acts as well as the accompanying self-transparency have been attributed to Descartes. On another view, knowledge that one knows follows directly from the first act: to know is already to know that one knows. It has been argued that ancient philosophers understood 'knowing that one knows' broadly in terms of the latter option. Intellect has something like the Cartesian indubitability of things experienced by it: it cannot make mistakes about its own contents or its state, the wholly actual thought activity,[118] but this indubitability follows from a different kind of mental functioning in which there may not be a need to separate a second-order act directed to the first-order act.[119] From Aristotle onwards, the intellect's identity with its objects would, then, yield an incidental or opaque self-apprehension. To put the matter perhaps somewhat crudely, by becoming an intelligible object and thereby knowing it, the intellect knows itself *in* the intelligible object.[120] The appeal of this view is that it does not postulate two acts for a realisation of what would seem to be a unitary act – how could one truly and actively know without knowing that one knows – but its defect may be the way in which it disregards the special nature and contribution of the epistemic subject. The apprehension of the role of the subject is minimised, or even reduced to the apprehension of the objects. The question becomes whether it might be possible for a cognitive or epistemic subject to be aware of its own activity and nature as the subject of this activity without a second-order reflection on that activity.

Intellect's knowledge of its own activity may be guaranteed by its identity with the intelligible objects, but it is yet a further question what this self-knowledge actually reveals about the self. Scholars have, therefore, sometimes emphasised the Plotinian feature of self-awareness as knowledge of God and knowledge of the good, against the idea of it as knowledge of a

[118] Regardless of certain differences in motivation and emphasis this comparison seems fair. For secondary literature, cf. e.g. Rappe 1996.

[119] In the case of Aristotle, this reading may neglect the role of *sensus communis*. At least in the case of perception, there may be a faculty or function of the soul responsible for the unification and ordering of perceptions, and thereby a second act necessary to supplement the role of perception. Cf. chapter 2.

[120] Crystal 2002: *passim*. For posing the problem, see e.g. Introduction.

substantial self.[121] The 'self' that is known in the identity is the intelligible universe, rather than a subject or a personal self. The apprehension of the objects would, in this reading, strongly objectify the subject.

Two scholars in particular have lately drawn attention to the fact that Plotinus offers interesting developments within these discussions. L. P. Gerson claims that in Plotinus, knowing that one knows is a necessary but further feature of knowledge. In his wording, self-reflexivity is the capacity for cognising our own states without interpreting them, without ascribing the feeling of, say, sorrow, that it is just sorrow that is felt. It is just the immediate and self-evidential awareness of the feeling itself. Plotinus believes that true knowledge necessarily includes such an immediate and self-evidential awareness that one knows what one knows, and that in this aspect, too, the Intellect is paradigmatic for cognition in general.[122] According to Ian Crystal, Plotinus offers an account of self-intellection in which the epistemic subject apprehends itself in a transparent and not merely accidental or opaque manner.[123] Despite the differences in the two readings and in the terminology used, it seems that the scholars agree on the main points. Plotinus' understanding of the self-intellection of the intellect includes an immediate understanding of its own act. His argument is a continuation of the Aristotelian theme of self-intellection and identity between the thinker and his objects, but it yields an immediate knowledge of the thinker's activity, a self-transparency that is not, as Crystal puts it, 'eclipsed' by the apprehension of the objects.

This discussion is continued below by an analysis of the steps Plotinus takes in arriving at the self-transparent self-intellection. A careful reading of the options he dismisses as unsatisfactory reveals that what he is after is a special kind of subjectivity. It will be further argued that one of Plotinus' achievements is to foreshadow what is occasionally referred to as the paradox of subjectivity: being the subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world. This includes two moves. First, in his discussion on the identity relation of the intellect, Plotinus describes the intellect as 'a thinking thing', that is, the activity or actuality of thinking. This thing is, moreover, a thinking thing thinking itself. Intellect's self-reflexive[124] thought yields not

[121] Lloyd 1969/70: Intellect's reflexion is at least not primarily self-knowledge; O'Daly 1973: 73–4: man is himself the intelligible universe; Gerson 1997b: Intellect is primarily oriented to the good or the One and as a result it cognises all Forms, which in turn produces the result that it cognises itself; Verbeke 1997: self-consciousness is at once knowledge of the divine principle and of cosmic reality as a coherent totality animated by the divine Spirit; cf. also Gerson 1997a; Sorabji 1999.

[122] Gerson 1997a; 1997b. [123] Crystal 2002: chapter 3.6.

[124] The term is here again in the more specific use (cf. p. 1, n. 2 and chapter 2.1). Gerson 1997b holds that Intellect's self-thinking ought to be viewed as an exemplary cause of all inferior kinds of thought.

just immediate knowledge of its objects, but also a paradigmatic knowledge of itself as what it most truly is, a subject of thinking. Intellect's self-intellection is thereby both transparent *and* informative of what it is to be a self. It has every right to self-knowledge as a substantial self of a particular kind, as the knowing substance. This, of course, is far from self-knowledge in the modern sense of knowledge of a personal and embodied self, and in an ideal case this knowledge coincides with the knowledge of the entire intelligible universe, but it does emphasise the thinker as the subject or agent of its own activity.

Second, Plotinus distinguishes another, reflective or mediated mode of self-relation, in which the thinker approaches itself in the same mediated way in which it approaches the world. This relation to oneself is quite legitimate, and indeed, many of Plotinus' own works can be classified as attempts at self-knowledge of this kind, but it yields neither the immediacy and infallibility of self-intellection, nor knowledge of the essential nature of subjectivity. For the embodied thinker, both kinds of self-understandings are revelatory of its many-dimensional nature.

Thinker and the activity of thought

In search of the subjectivity of the Intellect, let us note three different ways in which Plotinus attributes to the Intellect a peculiar inherent nature or activity regardless of its objects. First, the Intellect is not a bare *other* with respect to the One, nor is it passive wax that is defined by the One. Before actually seeing the One the Intellect is said to have appetite or desire and unformed sight (*ephesis, atupōtos opsis*; V.3.11.12). The desire is an active desire towards the good, towards possessing it by knowing it. It is not completely blind, but capable of directing itself to what it desires, of turning and looking at the good source it came from. Knowledge is described as a longing for the absent, and the discovery made by a seeker.[125] It belongs to the nature of the Intellect as such to desire and to seek, and hence it perhaps embodies a rudimentary subject stance.[126]

Second, an underlying reason for the separation of the Intellect from the One in the first place is described by Plotinus as audacity or daring (*tolma*) – a pejorative term – and self-determination or self-mastery (*autexousion*).

Gerson develops self-reflexivity also in 1997a. I am indebted to him, amongst other things, for his distinction between introspection as a method of (self-)inquiry and self-reflexion as a feature of infallible thought, 'the power to take cognisance of our own immediate states, whether these be cognitive or affective' (Gerson 1997a: 3).

[125] V.3.10.49–50. [126] Cf. Emilsson forthcoming a, chapter 2.

The Intellect's coming to separate existence is said to be due to its daring or audacity in stepping away from the One.[127] When the Intellect contemplates the One, it, as it were, without noticing becomes two and loses its oneness – although Plotinus thinks that it would have been better if it had not willed this.[128] An exact philosophical interpretation of these metaphorical passages may be hard to come by, but it is good to keep in mind that Plotinus describes the Intellect as both desiring and daring, and that even 'before' the activity of contemplating the intelligibles, the Intellect has some kind of identity as separate from the One.

Third, Plotinus requires that the Intellect must have self-reflexive awareness of its own thoughts. Furthermore, Intellect must have this feature because human minds display it too. If people are even moderately serious, says Plotinus, they will engage in reflective thought. People watch over their impulses and thoughts, and if we had no consciousness of our own thoughts, we would be blamed for witlessness (*aphrosunē*). Because the Intellect is a paradigm thinker, it cannot be less than human thinkers.[129] If it is natural for us to introspect and know about our impulses and thoughts, reasons Plotinus, it ought to be a part of paradigmatic thought as well. And presumably its self-reflection, whatever that turns out to be, ought to be better and more complete than ours. Instead of contingent, it should be perfect and paradigmatic.

In the case of normal, everyday discursive thought of embodied souls it can reasonably be expected that, in order not to be 'witless', reflective thought is required for several purposes. Introspection has both practically and ethically important uses. Together with the Stoics and several more modern and current thinkers, Plotinus assumes that it is possible for a human mind, as it were, to step back from its immediate states and to reflect and consider them as if from a distance or from above.[130] In the case of the hypostasis Intellect, the functions and the demand for self-reflexive awareness must be different. The Intellect does not reflect on any images presented to it. It is identical to the forms inside it, and therefore it is far from detached from its objects of thought. Its relation to itself is more immediate: it has true self-reflexivity. Since the Intellect is both the thinker and its objects of thought, in a fairly uninteresting sense it can be said to engage in reflexive thought by the necessity of its nature. Its thought about

[127] VI.9.5.29. [128] III.8.8.32–6.

[129] II.9.1.40–50. What is objected to is μὴ παρακολουθοῦντα δὲ ἑαυτῷ ὅτι νοεῖ.

[130] That this introspection is central for the Stoic therapy is evident from e.g. Epict. *Ench.* 1.5; 34. For detachment, cf. Hampshire 1959: e.g. 213; for a useful survey and counter-arguments, see Jopling 2000: 63–70.

its own content is self-reflexive by definition. In this sense, merely the abolition of the ontological distinction between subject and object renders the Intellect a peculiar species of self-awareness.

But the ways in which Plotinus argues for the identity and the self-reflexivity connected with it shows that he has something more interesting in mind. Intellect's self-reflexivity is not just identity with the objects but their transparency to the knower. Furthermore, he makes a stronger claim, namely that the Intellect's self-awareness involves not only an awareness of its contents, but an awareness of the activity itself and that it is the *subject* of that activity. The steps he takes in making this point are worth a scrutiny.

Plotinus starts the *Ennead* 'On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond' (V.3) by asking whether that which thinks itself has to be complex, in such a way that in its self-intellection (*noēsis heautou, noein heauto*) one of its constituents would be thinking the rest. As in the case of any knowing, he thinks that this kind of 'knowledge' leaves something to be desired. It lacks directedness. In true self-knowledge the knower knows itself, not something outside of itself, or parts of itself. As an example of an inadequate case he dismisses awareness of one's body as true self-awareness.[131] I have already argued at some length that perception of one's body lacks a claim to true self-knowledge because, when the perceptual faculty is aware of the body to which it is connected, it is nonetheless aware of something outside itself. Even though it would be seeking things that it is itself among or connected with, the search would not be about itself but rather something else (V.3.1.11–12).[132]

The demand that self-knowledge must be knowledge of the whole of itself, not the knowledge of parts of a whole by that part which has the knowing (or seeing) capacity, seems to have two motivations. The distinction between internal and external shows Plotinus' concern for the immediacy of any true knowledge. Hence the requirement of identity between the knower and the known. But another motivation can be supplied. It can be asked whether the knower, in knowing parts of itself other than the knowing part, would actually know *itself* at all. So far, the text does not explicitly state this worry, but as it certainly leaves room for such an interpretation, let us keep it in mind.

At V.3.5.1ff., Plotinus considers again the possibility of knowing oneself in terms of a part knowing another part. This time the suggestion is that if self-knowledge is not fulfilled by the seer seeing the seen, perhaps if two

[131] *sunaisthēsis*; V.3.2.4–5. Cf. chapter 2.1.
[132] This argument seems to owe to Sext. Emp. *Adv. M.* 7.303–9; Crystal 2002: 158.

parts are exactly alike (*homoiomeres*), one part in knowing the other would know itself.[133] But this, says Plotinus, is impossible:

> How would the one who contemplates (*ho theorōn*) know itself in the contemplated (*en tō theoroumenō*), having set himself as the one who contemplates? For the contemplating (*to theōrein*) is not in the contemplated. Knowing himself (*gnous heauton*) in this way he will think himself as contemplated, *not as contemplating* (*ou theōrounta noēsei*); so that he does not know (*gnōsetai*)[134] the all or the whole of himself; for what he saw he saw contemplated but not contemplating, and so he will have seen other, but not himself. (V.3.5.10–15)

Even if the Intellect is divided into two identical parts, both of which have the capacity to think and to be thought of, something is missing for this to count as self-knowledge.

(1) In one part's thinking the other, that *actual* thought activity would go unreflected. Nothing would think the thinking of one part of the other, and hence its activity, the actual thinking, would not be included in its so-called self-reflexive thought. Since the Intellect is a perfect knower, there cannot be an activity of which it would not be aware. (2) Since the activity that would go unnoticed is its own activity, this not-knowing would make the Intellect not just an imperfect knower, but a knower unaware of itself. Its paradigmatic status as a self-knower would be at risk. (3) As Plotinus says, the thinker would not be thinking itself *as a thinker*. It would think itself either as contemplated by the other part – as an object for someone else – or as that other part, as that someone else (contemplated by itself). Its so-called 'knowledge' of itself would be not just incomplete, but downright deceiving.

Here, Plotinus not only emphasises the nature of the thinker as a thinking thing, but he comes also very close to proposing that for a knower to know itself it must know itself *qua* knower. The same idea may be referred to already earlier in Plotinus' observation that a thing cannot have true self-knowledge, if it thinks just things it is *among* or with (V.3.1.10–11). Self-knowledge may be somehow different from other species of knowledge. The thinker's self-knowledge must include knowledge of itself *as that which knows*, not as one of the intelligibles.

[133] An argument resembling this is also supplied by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. M.* 7.312; cf. Crystal 2002: 160), but the details as well as the reasons why the option is dismissed seem different. For the passage, cf. also Emilsson 1995: 33–4.

[134] It should be noted that Plotinus' choice is here *gnōsis* rather than *epistēmē*. I wish to make two points about this choice of terminology: first, that it is, of course, the traditional term used in context of self-knowledge by, among others, Plato's Socrates, and second, that Plotinus seems to want to keep *epistēmē* separate, for it involves the whole system of Platonic ideas and the kind of self-familiarity that goes with that system but is conceptually separate from it.

The claim is strengthened by Plotinus' next move. He suggests that perhaps the contemplator could add to the contemplated the idea of itself as a contemplator. What is needed for true self-knowledge is an understanding of the thinking subject *qua* that subject. Unfortunately the suggestion to reproduce such an idea, and to add it to the things one knows, violates the identity claim and thereby also the infallibility of true knowledge. The immediacy requirement demanded that Intellect's knowledge is *the thing* – in this case the knower – *itself*, not any duplication, impression or appearance of it (V.3.5.16–19). If it is by definition a knower, not a believer, it cannot have itself *qua* thinker as an intentional object. Therefore to capture both (a) itself as infallibly as it captures other internal objects of knowledge, and (b) the essential nature of itself, it must have a direct awareness of itself *qua* knower. This is both self-reflexivity and self-knowledge.

If that which is a subject of contemplation were to have true self-knowledge, it would know itself *qua* subject of contemplation. If the Intellect knew its contents as identical to itself but had no knowledge of itself as being the one who knows, the subject of knowing, its self-knowledge would be seriously flawed. Knowing oneself as the object of thought would miss the essential nature of the thinking thing. True self-awareness and self-knowledge, Plotinus insists, comprehends not just all the needed objects but also oneself *qua* the contemplator.

Plotinus' final solution is to claim that the Intellect is both itself, its intelligible objects and the activity thinking them:

> If it then is actuality and its substance is actuality, it is one and the same with its actuality. But being and intelligible are [also] one with actuality. It is all simultaneously: the intellect (*nous*), the intellection (*noēsis*) and the intelligible (*to noēton*). If its [the intellect's] intellection is the intelligible, and the intelligible is itself, it will thus itself think itself; *for it will think by thinking that which is itself* (*noēsei gar tē noēsei, hoper ēn autos*). And it will think the intelligible which is itself. In each case it thus thinks itself, in what manner it itself is intellection and in what manner it itself is the intelligible, which thinks by intellection and which is itself. (V.3.5.41–8)

The Intellect is the actuality of thought, a thinking *thing*. It thinks as and by that actuality. *In thinking always that which it is*, the thinker thinks always that it is thinking.[135] Knowing who it is involves knowing that it is the actuality of thinking. This is also suggested by Plotinus' view that if the Intellect were other than the thinking activity and other than the thought, its substance would be unintellectual (*anoētos*; V.9.5.7–8). Its self-reflexive thought activity is described as possessing and seeing itself in a certain way,

[135] II.9.1.52.

'not devoid of intelligence, but thinking' (II.9.1.48–50).[136] Without further reflection, the intellect knows its own acts and recognises them as its own. A correct understanding of Intellect's nature as thinking (thing) is essential for the kind of united knowledge and self-knowledge Plotinus has in mind.

But recall that an identity between the thinker and his thoughts seemed to render the thinker's subjectivity overshadowed or objectified by intelligible objects. Does Plotinus believe that the mere identity yields also the kind of elaborate self-knowledge he requires? What secures that the subject is not objectified beyond recognition? The problem is especially pressing if Plotinus holds not just the idea that the intelligibles are identical with the intellect, but – as has sometimes been suggested – that the intelligibles are even ontologically prior to it,[137] which might point to the direction that they strongly determine the nature of a subject rather than *vice versa*. A more accurate understanding of the nature of the thinker and the thoughts is needed.

The options available seem at first sight to be of two types: either Plotinus thinks oddly about the thinker, as if objectifying it, or he thinks strangely about the objects of thought, subjectifying them.[138] There is evidence for both views. Plotinus says more than once that the intelligibles and being precede or are primary to the Intellect itself.[139] He also holds that what is composed of parts depends on its components for its existence.[140] The Intellect consists of forms. It is nothing but these objects. Yet elsewhere Plotinus seems to hold not only that the Intellect is the real beings, but that it contemplates them and supports or underlies them, and even that it generates them. He also maintains that the intelligibles are neither prior nor posterior to the Intellect.[141] Since no one consistent view presents itself in the *Enneads*, it can perhaps be concluded that if being and Intellect are the same, then the identity claim makes it futile to inquire which comes first.[142] One may therefore also conclude that there could be both objectifying and subjectifying going on in the Intellect.

Ian Crystal has suggested that the structural problem of being both identical and preserving the difference between the subject and the objects can be solved. The Intellect could be identical to its objects *qua* substance but not *qua* activities or states, because a distinction between knower, known and knowing can be made.[143] If there may be two or more states

[136] The rare verb *ἀνοηταίνω is used by Plato in *Phlb.* 12d.
[137] Sorabji 2001.
[138] I am indebted to Verity Harte for putting the matter in this way.
[139] E.g. V.9.8.9–15; VI.6.6.5–30; VI.6.8.17–22.
[140] V.4.1.12–15.
[141] νοεῖ τὰ ὄντα καὶ ὑφίστησιν; V.9.5.13; 27–8; V.1.4.20–30; VI.7.15.14–22.
[142] V.2.1.12–13. Cf. Sorabji 2001, who points out how being and Intellect are both activities.
[143] Crystal 1998.

or activities taking place, perhaps the intelligibles do objectify the thinker and it, in turn, subjectifies them in some manner.

What interests us here is the manner in which subject is present in Intellect's functioning. Let me first make it explicit in which sense 'subjective' and 'subjectivity' are used here. Broadly taken, ancient philosophers did not conceive the subject primarily as someone who has private or inter-subjectively non-accessible experiences. The question of subjective states, or qualitative aspects of experiences and their accessibility, was rarely discussed.[144] It has been argued that epistemic asymmetry of the modern kind – the idea that the availability of certain states is privileged to the subject – was not a focal issue for Plato. Indeed, although in some dialogues it seems at first sight that if there is an epistemic asymmetry, Plato could as readily opt for third-personal rather than for first-personal authority, that is, for Socrates' authority over the beliefs of the interlocutor.[145] More relevantly to the present inquiry, as we have seen, since for Plotinus the objects of knowledge are shared and the activity of the *nous* identical with them, there is little room to argue that something like qualia separates the thoughts of one thinker from those of another. Any special status of first-person or subjective perspective seems to be annihilated by the universal character of these internalised objects of knowledge with which one has a non-representational identity relation. Yet Plotinus as well as other ancient philosophers did, of course, understand the thoughts and feelings of a particular person as belonging to that person, as being initiated by a particular subject or being his or her *own*.[146] In the discussion about *nous*' activity, Plotinus would seem to be adamant that somehow even intellect's perfect activity includes a subjective element in this limited sense. This suggests an ancient notion of subjectivity, but one of a very abstract kind.

One way by which to try to make sense of the subjectifying aspect of the *nous* is the following: first and foremost the Intellect is the actuality of thought. Its substance is the wholly actual capacity to think, to understand. This understanding coincides with the universe being intelligible. Knowing and understanding always require objects, and a wholly actual knowing activity thinks all forms 'at all times'. But if our former understanding of

[144] There does seem to be, however, some interest in the question of superiority and inferiority of different persons' thoughts, that is, their position *vis à vis* acquisition of knowledge, and at least the Cyrenaics would seem to treat appearances as subjective close to the modern sense of the term. For discussion: Burnyeat 1982; Everson 1991b; Fine 2003; Remes forthcoming b. Cf. Hadot arguing against Michel Foucault's reading of the ancient self and subject, Hadot 1995.

[145] Although this may not ultimately be the view propounded. Woolf forthcoming.

[146] Cf. Remes forthcoming b. For subjective in the sense of first-personal givenness, cf. Zahavi 2003: esp. 60.

the thinker was inadequate, so is our view of what it is to be an object of thought. Intellect's fully actual *understanding* of its contents renders, as it were, the objects from mere objects into *understood objects*. The *noēta* are eternally going through a thought process. They are themselves partial powers or actualities of thought. The intelligibles are called intelligibles because of this actuality, because they have gone, as it were, through the process of being thought and known. This is why an intelligible being is both an object of thought, *noēton*, and an act of thought, *noēsis*. And this is what Plotinus means by the intelligibles having the Intellect 'as their actuality upon them'.[147] In its functioning, it incorporates them into its own nature, as it were.

This view may be supported by Plotinus' claim that since in some sense the intelligibles '*precede*' the activity of intellection, that actuality of thinking is *in* the intelligibles. Not only is the Intellect also being and substance, but each of the intelligibles is, rather than different from *nous*, somehow also a/the *nous*.[148] What this means is somewhat obscure. Plotinus may be, in a way, subjectifying the intelligibles. The intelligibles are not mere objects but active parts of the actuality of thought. They are, he says, like theorems in the sense that they have their own special power within the whole of knowledge.[149] One way in which this special 'power-parthood' is expressed is Intellect's self-evidential knowing that it knows these forms. The forms are within it in such a special way that there is no room for doubting them nor the fact that the Intellect is thinking them.[150] As part of the Intellect's activity, each thought is also self-identifying.

Some further clarification can be sought from the two previous chapters. Chapter 2.1 argued for the importance of both structure and self-awareness. Section 3.1 of this chapter attempted to articulate the kind of activity intellection is and to argue that the Intellect and its objects ought not to be viewed simply as a set or collection of objects. I explained how (1) some of the objects or contents of Intellect, namely the primary genera of sameness and difference, are well interpreted as dispositions or capacities of structured thought whose purpose is to relate other forms to each other; and

[147] ἐφ' ἑαυτοῖς ἔχη ἐνέργειαν αὑτῶν; V.9.8.14–5; VI.6.6.23–6.

[148] οὐχ ἑτέρα τοῦ νοῦ ἑκάστη ἰδέα, ἀλλ' ἑκάστη νοῦς. καὶ ὅλος μὲν ὁ νούς τὰ πάντα εἶδη, ἕκαστον δὲ εἶδος νοῦς ἕκαστος, V.9.8.2–4. I have translated the central clause as 'each form is each thinker/mind', but it can also be read as saying that each thinker is each form. The latter reading leaves it obscure how the analogy of the body of knowledge as all its theorems (lines 5–6 that immediately follow) is supposed to illuminate the theory, and I treat the former reading therefore as more plausible. Gerson 1994: 55 holds the view that what is being said is simply the affirmation of the identity between the object and the Intellect. Despite our differences in reading the passage, I agree with him to the extent that what is meant is not that each of the objects of knowledge would be literally a *nous* (that is, a thinker involving the subject–object stance etc.).

[149] V.9.8.5–6.

[150] For the self-evidential status of self-reflexive knowledge, cf. Gerson 1997a: 7.

(2) that for the unity of the Intellect, or, for that matter, the thought of any reasonable thinker, a certain structure or understanding of interrelations of objects of thought is necessary. In the perpetual – or timeless – act of thinking about the objects in their proper relations with each other they become known, understood. The Intellect cannot take the overflow from the One as an absolute unity, but it creates its own kind of 'unity in multiplicity' by realising the forms as separate and yet together in all their interrelations. As we have seen, it is in full realisation of the harmonious order of the intelligibles. It 'sees' the objects in their right places, or to put it in less spatial terms, in their full relations to each other. That the unity of the forms is a result of their being powers that take care of their own special duties is explicit in Plotinus.[151]

As such, the intelligibles are not merely the objects or contents of the Intellect, but all of them carry in them the essence of having been understood. This consists of their order and relations with each other *and* Intellect's fully aware and actual thinking of them in this structured unity 'at all times'. The self-reflexive understanding of and identity with all its contents also brings with itself Intellect's self-knowledge of itself as a single existing thing (*to noein hoti noei hōs hen on*; II.9.1.51; cf. V.9.8.14). As something simple, its ontological status in the Plotinian hierarchy is of course higher than something multiple. In its being simple it resembles the paradigmatic unity, the One. Again, at a banal or uninteresting level it can be said that as the objects are within one intellect, the whole must be a unity. But that would be to oversimplify the point. Plotinus is here not just asserting that the multiplicity of objects is a unity because the Intellect is one, is single.[152] Rather, he is trying to explain what *makes* it a unity. To this the twofold answer of order and awareness of that order again answers satisfactorily. That the multiplicity of the collection of objects creates one unity is due to the thought activity ensuring that the forms are part of that activity in the sense of being, in a correct way, interrelated with one another. The internal order and harmony make the set of forms an internally coherent and unified whole.[153] In creating and being aware of its order, the intellect in a sense *is* that order.

My suggestion is, then, that by its actualising activity, the Intellect leaves its own mark on the intelligibles by realising them in a complex structure that it sustains and contemplates. Since it correctly realises this order, it

[151] V.9.6.

[152] Its unity is derived from the One, but displayed in a manner peculiar to the Intellect, which, in turn, is better/more perfect than the manner in which things which contain matter can be.

[153] For two ways of thinking about unity, internal and external or unity within a context, see e.g. McCabe 1994: e.g. 17.

cannot fail to understand its own role in creating and sustaining it. It does not need to ask who thinks that order because it is the originator of it, and each part of it is immediately available for it as its own act.

The answer to the criticism that the self of the self-intellection of this sort is not special or personal enough to be a self, and that its self-reflexivity would hardly qualify as knowledge of a self, becomes both yes and no. Intellect's self-knowledge does not yield any personal or individual information. What it reveals in addition to the objects of knowledge is subjectivity. The kind of objective analysis of the subject's nature attempted above yields the general structures of subjectivity shared by all intellects, whereas intellect's own activity reveals, from within, its 'I', its own subjectivity at work.[154] In modern parlance, one could provocatively claim that all objects actualised by the intellect enjoy a first-personal 'givenness'. They involve a built-in self-reference.

Moreover, in the end even the objectifying aspect of identity between the thinker and its intelligible objects need not be understood simply in negative terms. As G. J. P. O'Daly has suggested, Intellect's self-aware identity with the structured objects can be regarded as an increase of oneself rather than as a loss.[155]

To recapitulate: the Intellect knows all the things that are knowable. But its act of knowing them is not any simple existence or appearance of the objects in the mind. As far as its objects of thought are truly internal to and identical with it, they are already 'processed', that is, understood. This understanding involves realising them both as separate, defined individuals, and in the unity of their complex relations to one another. As a further aspect but not as a further act it includes being aware that one has and thinks the intelligibles, and that oneself is the thinker actualising them. Even though the Neoplatonic intellect differs from the modern or Kantian ego-pole by being everything rather than nothing, it does display a similarly thin and formal subject.

The discursive subject

In several writings, Plotinus emphasises that souls are something active, makers and doers. They are that part of the living human being which is truly efficacious. He stresses against the Stoics and Aristotelians that the

[154] Emilsson forthcoming b, chapter 2, draws attention to the fact that Plotinus describes Intellect's activity in the first person, and suggests that its statements are self-identifying.

[155] Cf. O'Daly 1973: 61–2. For the benefits that this grasp could have, cf. chapter V on ethics.

soul substance is not a body nor any affection or entelechy, but an action and a making, a subject or agent of many different things.[156] This force and capacity of making has two sides. Souls individuate, mould and shape individuals through their causally efficacious side, *logoi*. They also largely govern the changes in the sensible sphere.[157] Second, they are proper subjects of mental functions, of mental states, and among them, most importantly, of thoughts. Because the rational human souls have an intellect within them, they have an inherent will to think, to move towards goodness.[158] This would seem to suggest that for a soul to know itself it ought to know itself also as the subject of mental states. But whereas knowing that one knows is a necessary feature of paradigmatic intellection, it is not so for human thinking.

According to Plotinus, soul as such does not have paradigmatic self-knowledge. First, in the case of human souls knowing and knowing that one knows do not necessarily coincide:

> For even if thinking in these [our reasonings][159] is other than thinking that one thinks, it is one application [of the same mind/same activity?], not unaware of its activities.[160] But it would be ridiculous to suppose this of the true Intellect, for that which thinks is wholly the same as the one who thinks that it thinks. (II.9.1.34–8; cf. V.3.2)

Discursive reasoning differs from paradigmatic thought in that discursive reasoning concerns things external to it. It deals with (re)presentations. Therefore its thinking that it is thinking does not follow simply from its thinking in the way we saw happening in the case of the Intellect. Its reflexive capacity must be, rather, either a capacity to be aware or to reflectively concentrate on the thinking activity and the thinker itself. Were the soul to attain true self-*knowledge*, it would already have come into accord with the Intellect.[161]

[156] πρᾶξις δὲ καὶ ποίησις, καὶ πολλὰ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς; IV.7.8[5].43–6.

[157] Cf. chapter I.2.

[158] V.2.2.9–10; III.4.6.6–7.

[159] I am inclined to agree with A. H. Armstrong (who translates 'on our level') that *en toutois* must mean this, for no other referent to it can be found in the text.

[160] The Greek here is μία προσβολὴ οὐκ ἀναίσθητος τῶν ἐνεργημάτων ἑαυτῆς. According to Phillips 1990, *epibolē* and *prosbolē* are technical terms borrowed from Hellenistic discussions on perception, especially from the Epicureans. Plotinus uses them as synonyms, and their meaning has often to do with a single vision of something that may also be looked upon differently, focusing attention on parts and details. I find that part of his argument persuasive (also, e.g., ἐναργής is used at V.5.1.10, 13), although in here *mia prosbolē* cannot have quite such a specific meaning – unless one takes thinking and thinking that one thinks to be the two parts that belong to one and the same activity.

[161] *kat' ekeinon*; V.3.3.31.

Even though our thinking is not necessarily self-reflexive, our mental states are accessible to ourselves. Earlier Plotinus attributed a capacity to reflect on one's mental states to everyone not 'witless', and in the above quotation he stated that awareness of activities belongs essentially to the thinking ability itself.[162] As we have seen especially in chapter 2.2, the soul is aware of its activities and the body it occupies, and is capable of directing attention towards both if need be. The embodied self has access only to its own bodily and mental states, and is capable of viewing them, without reflection, as *its own* states. Moreover, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, embodied subjects can, and should, direct a reflective gaze at their perceptions and memories. This turn is necessary for self-improvement. By now it is clear that neither the immediate bodily self-awareness nor the self-understanding acquired by reflective activity qualify as infallible self-knowledge. The former, although immediate, does not yield information about the true self, and the latter is unlikely to be complete. Because it is mediated, it leaves plenty of room for self-deception.

But what, asks Plotinus, if discursive reason were to know that it is the reasoning part, and that its reasonings concern both impressions from outside and from the Intellect, and that the Intellect is superior to and above it? In knowing what kind of thing one is and what are the things one does, cannot one then say that one has self-knowledge?[163] This suggestion is directed to a more specialised kind of self-knowledge which requires much systematic philosophising about psychology and Neoplatonic metaphysics, and it is an activity of which we have plenty of evidence in the fourth book of the *Enneads*. But even soul's knowing itself in this way will not amount to true self-*knowledge*. It is still mediated by likenesses. It is not infallible.[164] Moreover, it would not fully or directly grasp its own subjective nature.

[162] L. P. Gerson (1997a; 1997b) has argued that Plotinus does indeed recognise this feature of (human) consciousness and that the self-reflexivity of the Intellect is a paradigmatic instance of this feature.

[163] V.3.4.15–20.

[164] This, if I have understood correctly, is why Gerson (1997a and b) differentiates between self-reflexivity and self-knowledge. According to the way I read Plotinus, too, self-reflexivity is not primarily a matter of knowing oneself as a substantial self if that means a personal or human self, but perhaps a distant relative of something like a transcendental ego, the 'I' of every 'I think'. I interpret differently from Gerson and from O'Daly (1973: 79) V.6.5.16–19 which states that self-thinking is merely an accident of thinking of the Good. The Intellect thinks primarily the good, secondarily the forms, and only thirdly, as a result of the former two itself. In my view, the nature of thought activity is such as to be directed towards the good. The Intellect *is* that thought activity, it is what-is-directed-to-other-than-itself-that-is-the-good. Intellect is non-intentionally 'about' the good. So in thinking the good it also necessarily thinks itself. By saying that it thinks itself accidentally (*kata sumbebēkos*) Plotinus emphasises what we have seen him emphasise over and over again: that it cannot reach itself by thinking itself as an object, that is, being directed towards itself, because that way its true nature as a *subject* of thinking would be lost. Self-knowledge is attainable, rather, indirectly through directedness towards the Good and through full identity with the forms.

This kind of self-inquiry is nonetheless beneficial, or perhaps even a necessary step towards the higher self-knowledge of the intellect. In the beginning of the long treatises on the difficulties about the soul, Plotinus states that the enquiry into the *soul* obeys the command to 'know ourselves'. He then makes a further demand: 'since we want to examine and discover other things, it would be right to examine what it is which seeks, longing to grasp the lovely vision of the intellect' (IV.3.1.10–12; V.3.9.1–2). The structure of the inquiry is the same in the case of both the soul and the Intellect: the thinking thing inquires into itself, into its own nature. In the case of the Intellect this was the pure Intellect and its objects; in the treatise on the soul it is the soul as the subject of various mental phenomena: thought, passion, perception and memory. Embodied selves can actually 'know' themselves in two ways, as discursive reason and as Intellect.[165] Since human beings have a many-dimensional selfhood, or as Plotinus puts it, have a multitude of selves (*to plēthos heautēn*), to reach a comprehensive understanding of themselves they need to learn all different aspects.[166] This tells more about their inclusive nature than pure intellectual self-intellection. Since they are embodied and discursive thinkers, understanding this aspect of their own nature seems essential for self-understanding. However, after this first step on the way to true self-understanding Plotinus suggests that one ought to get rid of all other functions and characteristics of one's embodied self and see oneself merely as Intellect.[167] The former understanding is a phase in the way of realising one's deepest nature, but it reveals, nonetheless, an important part of what it is to be an *embodied* subject.

Even though reflective self-inquiry would not be able to fully grasp subjectivity, as a phenomenon the latter is not exclusive to the Intellect:

> Moreover, it should be remembered that even whenever one contemplates here, and in a very clear way, then *one does not turn towards oneself in thinking, but one has oneself*, and one's activity is directed to that [which one thinks], and one becomes that by supplying oneself [to it] like matter (*hoion hulē*), being formed according to what one sees and being then oneself potentially (*dunamei ōn tote autos*). Is one therefore actually oneself when one doesn't think? If one is oneself, one is empty of everything when one does not think. If one is oneself in such a way as to be all, when one thinks of oneself, one simultaneously thinks of everything. (IV.4.2.3–11)

Clear thought has the feature of being directed to the object of thought, be that internal or external, not towards oneself. One is directed towards the

[165] Were the soul to realise itself solely as intellect, it would not remember itself, nor the personal self, e.g. that it once was Socrates. IV.4.2.1–3; V.3.4.8–11.

[166] VI.7.41.22–8.

[167] τὰ ἄλλα ἀφεὶς ἑαυτοῦ τούτῳ καὶ τοῦτον βλέπει, αὑτῷ δὲ ἑαυτόν; V.3.4.29–30.

object, whereas the subject, oneself, features in the thought as a presence, a place or 'matter' of intellection.[168] This is a feature of thought shared by both noetic and discursive thought. Both the ascended and the embodied thinker act in similar ways in one respect. Their activity is such that the role of the subject who is doing the activity is special. The thinker is not an object among others, not an intentional object or object of any other kind but a power to think, to understand, to become and actualise the forms. Hence it cannot be grasped in the same manner in which the objects of thought are grasped, but understood, rather, as some kind of immediate presence.

The highly elaborate and seemingly modern point Plotinus is making is that the self as thinker – the subject or the thought's *ego*, if you like – is something altogether different from any objects it is directed towards. Because it is the self-aware activity of thinking, the capacity to take on new objects and to organise them, it simply cannot be grasped correctly as one of them. If one attempts to catch the self who is remembering or thinking (itself), the actual thinking and the self's role in thinking ought to be incorporated. Self-knowledge must show us the self *qua* subject, not *qua* object.

For Plotinus' understanding of the self, rational subjectivity is central. In fact, Plotinus comes twice surprisingly close to the Augustinian–Cartesian *cogito* arguments. Once he argues that when we think ourselves, we think the thinking nature: otherwise we would be mistaken about the thinking.[169] Either in thinking ourselves we think about that which thinks or we are not thinking ourselves or anything at all. Elsewhere he says that for an intellect to disbelieve in its intellection amounts to a disbelief in its own existence.[170] Both 'arguments' – I doubt whether they merit such a grandiose name – are clearly used to refer to the impossibility or absurdity of *thinking* that one is not thinking.[171] The rational – and ultimately intellectual – self is a

[168] Alexander of Aphrodisias contends that if the intellect were to have a character of its own (in the same sense as the objects of knowledge have a character), it could not become, that is, understand other things, as its character would be alien and thus, in a way overshadow, the things it attempts to grasp (*De anima* 84, 14–17). What is certainly being underlined is the intellect's receptivity in relation to the objects of knowledge (cf. e.g. Tuominen 2006, forthcoming b), but I take this also to imply, in Plotinus, that the subject is not one of the objects, indeed, nothing like the objects. Its nature is something else, the capacity of reception and actualisation of intelligible content.

[169] νοοῦντες αὑτοὺς βλέπομεν δηλονότι νοοῦσαν φύσιν, ἢ ψευδοίμεθα ἂν τὸ νοεῖν; III.9.6.1–2.

[170] V.8.11.37–8.

[171] Plotinus' two references do not give as much material for reconstructing a fully-fledged argument as Augustine's *City of God*, XI.26, or Descartes' considerations in his *Discourses*, nor is the position of the idea in his thought central in comparison to the other two. For Augustine and Descartes, cf. e.g. Matthews 1992; 2000.

higher self for a manifold of reasons. It is the principle of the competences that enable self-improvement and self-integration. The core of these competences stays identical throughout the person's life, thus guaranteeing his or her strict identity. Through their involvement in the concept-formation and systematicity of the thought of the lower self, their impact on everyday life assures some psychological continuity also for the embodied and temporal self. Furthermore, the higher self secures the possibility of self-reflection: only a being already capable of treating experiences and cognitions as his own can turn to reflect on them. As the knower and the known, the intellect highlights such self-awareness. It yields, further, unerring knowledge of the essential order of the universe as well as of one's deepest nature as a thinking thing and as a subject. It remains to be seen what the theory's normative implications are and why the knowledge propounded might be desirable or useful for an embodied agent.

PART II

Constructing the self: between the world and the ideal

CHAPTER 4

Sculpting your self: self-determination, self-control and self-constitution

Although the word 'autonomy' comes from Greek *autonomos*, literally meaning 'living by one's own laws', and was used in Greece both for states and persons, treatises on moral autonomy are hard to find in ancient literature. This does not, of course, mean that ancient philosophers did not have opinions on what it means to be an agent, when an action is free, or what makes an agent responsible for his actions. In fact, the connected notions of self-determination and self-sufficiency are commonly agreed upon ideals that recur in philosophical literature. Central ancient terms used in contexts relevant to what we think is covered by the issue of autonomy undoubtedly include at least *enkrateia* (self-control), *autexousios* (in one's free power, or self-determined), *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency), *prohairesis* (deliberate choice), *hekousioslakousios* (voluntary/involuntary) and *akrasia* (weakness of will).[1] As the terminology of self-control and lack of it already shows, the ancients were inclined to worry about coercion that happens within the agent, namely the power of non-rational motivation to lead us into involuntary, or perhaps, rather, non-deliberate action. In addition to this, Platonic discussions on human freedom are closely intertwined with discussions on metaphysical necessity, and scholars have sometimes chosen to talk for instance of Plotinus' philosophy of freedom, rather than of any specifically human autonomy.

In this chapter I intend to follow two different ways of tracking Plotinus' views on what it is to be an autonomous agent and a self, both belonging to the approach where self is understood as a free or self-determining agent. I shall first offer a brief introduction to Plotinus' philosophy of freedom and self-determination, its central sources, terminology and tenets. In section 2.2, I will move on to examine autonomy and self-constitution in the context of emotions. The Platonic therapy of emotions is designed to lead

[1] Some of this terminology and its development in antiquity are treated by Sorabji 2000: chapter 21; Eliasson 2005.

into self-determination and free agency – a fully-fledged autonomy of the self.

In the latter discussion, I shall take for granted certain ideas, namely that when people talk of autonomy they are after an agent who has a certain independence, that is, who is not coerced or forced to think or do what he or she thinks or does. More often than not people also think that in order for a person to be autonomous, he must be at least on some minimal level rational. He must be capable of understanding the consequences of his actions in the world, especially how they affect other people. In order to be responsible for one's actions, a certain amount of rationality and mental health is required. Aristotle's view of willingness based on the absence of constraint and the presence of knowledge has commonsensical power. Having thus very roughly distinguished independence and deliberation as important for autonomous action, I will concentrate on passages in Plato and Plotinus in which these two notions are interestingly linked. These will prove to be discussions on the soul's different behavioural motivations, on emotions, and on the unity of the agent or self. Platonic self-constitution will function both as the basis on which Plotinus builds his own model and as a point of reference for the peculiarities and originality of Plotinus' views.

4.1. FREEDOM AND SELF-DETERMINATION

It has, with good reason, been pointed out by scholars that the terminology of autonomy is problematic in the context of ancient philosophy. This is because it easily carries with itself the Kantian and post-Kantian idea of self-legislation as an act by an individual. The individual binds himself to universal rules by an act of autonomy. In certain post-Kantian thinkers, the individual may himself determine even the validity of moral rules he legislates to himself. Ancient thinking about moral agency differs significantly from this picture by, among other things, lacking the modern individualistic view of agents as subjective or private realms and subjects of primarily individual choices, and by positing a universal good that all agents should, ideally, be able to recognise.[2] According to Socrates in the *Gorgias* (467–8), people always want what they think is good, and act for the sake of what is good, but in practice they do what they see fit (which may or may not be the true good). People do not recognise what is good but act on the

[2] For a criticism of a Kantian interpretation of ancient philosophy, cf. Gill 1996: especially the introduction.

basis of what *appears* good to them. As Aristotle puts it, different things *seem* good to different people (*EN* 1113a, esp. lines 30–1). This distinction creates a space for human activity in between real and apparent, ideal and actual. For Plotinus, truth, goodness and even freedom exist independently of human activities. Because of this external position they are desired and pursued rather than something that has its origin within the human mind in action. However, the possibility for acquisition of these things is internal to the soul. It relies on the innate link that the mind has to the universal: the higher self, the intellect, guarantees that human beings – provided that they strive hard to understand their true nature! – do have access to the universal principles governing the world, and to the good. The idea that the individual could determine what is *truly* good according to his own subjective taste is as foreign to Plotinus as it was to Plato.

Furthermore, ancient philosophy of the classical period is not preoccupied with the problem of determinism central to present discussions on autonomy. Rational deliberation is understood as integrally involved in the causal structures of the world rather than as something that could break or surpass those structures.[3] By the time of Plotinus, a small but perhaps significant shift in thinking had occurred regarding these issues. In Stoicism, the common Greek belief in fate, in which outcomes (but not necessarily the ways that lead to them) are predetermined, arrived at a stronger outlook and evolved into a central philosophical problem. The Stoics believed in universal causal determinism, even to the extent that it was suggested that every detail of a subsequent action in the world was predetermined. This view they had to try to accommodate with purposeful action and moral responsibility.[4] Plotinus is influenced by these developments, and in his treatise on providence (III.1), he accepts at least a qualified principle of universal causation but wants to insist that it does not entail determinism, and that human beings can be true origins (*archē*) of their action, that there are things that are genuinely in their power or, literally 'up to us' or 'that which depends on us' (*eph' hēmin*).[5] As we shall see in the next chapter, it becomes crucial for Plotinus to identify that part of a human agent which has the power of making the agent autonomous:[6] a free (*eleutheros*) and

[3] McCabe 2000: 237–8. [4] Bobzien 1998; LS 55. [5] III.1.7.11–8.13.

[6] From here on, I will use autonomy in this less specific sense, which does not entail all the post-Kantian connotations. I have reserved the otherwise more preferable term 'self-determination' for translations of αὐτεξούσιος. In my terminology self-determination is a given capacity of rational human souls whereas 'autonomous' can describe both the contemplative states of the free, higher self as well as actions that have their origin in this contemplation, but which are only qualifiedly free (cf. section 4.2).

self-determined (*autexousios*) agent, the actions of which reflect his true inner freedom.

A paradigm of freedom is the One. In a lengthy treatise on voluntariness and the will of the One (VI.8), Plotinus describes the One as its own cause (*aition heautou*; VI.8.14.41). The One is in no way dependent upon anything else, even to the extent that it creates and constitutes itself.[7] Although these terms properly apply to the realm in which things have relations to other things, and although as an absolute unity, the One is beyond any such relations – and indeed, beyond the grasp of language and predications – the terminology suits its nature. The One 'makes itself' and is a 'master of itself'. Unlike all other things, even its own being is in its power.[8] It has absolute autonomy and self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*); as its own cause, it is even the cause of its absolute freedom. It is self-engendered and self-caused.[9]

The treatment of the freedom and self-determination of the One is far from independent of worries pertaining to human existence and freedom. In the beginning of the treatise and also here and there in the text Plotinus wonders about the theoretical possibility as well as the actual human experience that certain things are in our power. Since that freedom is mostly compromised and, as he believes, derived from the causally higher levels of the metaphysical hierarchy, his choice is to concentrate, rather, on the pure paradigm. The paradigm reveals Plotinus' general ideals: it shows the value he places upon independence and on activities that are self-originating and self-sufficient, but also on the nature of freedom in question. The freedom of the One is not a freedom to choose to be whatever it wishes. By a kind of necessity, the One wants to be itself, to be what is good. This necessity is not an external coercion, but arises from the fact that there is nothing else, and certainly nothing better, that it could desire to be.[10] The same holds qualifiedly of human individuals: only the actions that are directed towards the good are properly free. They are free in the sense that they present the truest and best nature of humans and only they are invulnerable to chance and outside influences.[11] The striving towards truth and goodness also, as we shall see, gradually liberates the agent.

Plotinus is after the human experiences of self-determination, *to autexousion* and things being in our power, *eph' hēmin*, that is, being a master, and, as we shall see, origin, of one's own activity.[12] Determinedly, he dismisses the possibility that 'being in our power' could be attributed to impulse or

[7] Beierwaltes 1999: 198–201. [8] VI.8.13.10–11; 15.8–10.
[9] Beierwaltes 1990: XXXII ff.; Leroux 1996: 293. [10] E.g. VI.8.13.33–4; cf. Beierwaltes 1999: 201.
[11] VI.8.15.14–21; cf. Leroux 1996: 299–303 who talks of two different freedoms, the sovereign one of the perfect soul and the empirical one of the self existing in action.
[12] VI.8.7.16–30.

desire. What he has in mind is not something children, animals or madmen display, and yet no one would disagree with the idea that they are led by desire.[13] For him, being in our power is an even stronger relation to our activity than mere voluntariness. An action can be voluntary in the Aristotelian sense, that is, neither coerced nor caused by ignorance,[14] and still fall short of being truly free or in our power. Even when we have rationally deliberated whether a desire is worth following or not, the ensuing action may still be necessitated by something else, by powers that 'lead' the agent. In fact, Plotinus ends the section with a perhaps startling claim, which we will understand better at the end of the next chapter, namely that nothing in the sphere of action is purely in our power.

Freedom is based on knowledge of universal good and intelligible principles that govern the universe, and it is thus not primarily personal or subjective but strongly tied with the intelligible order. In itself an intellectual act is, however, an act which transcends the material causal order of the universe (*kosmikēs aitias exō*; III.1.8.9–10). Pure contemplation and intellectual understanding are outside the realm of necessities, and the freedom connected to intellection can, to a lesser degree, be reflected by the actions of the embodied self. The better and the more knowledgeable a soul is, the more it can ignore and even change the circumstances it finds itself in.[15]

A connected insistence on the idea that, despite the good providential order of the universe, human destiny is not altogether predetermined occurs in the context of Plotinus' interpretation of the Spindle and the choice of lives of *Republic* 10: 'But if the soul chooses its guardian spirit and chooses its life there in the other world, how have we still any power of decision?' (III.4.5.1–2). If the soul's deliberate purpose (*proairesis*),[16] disposition and character are preordained by a previous life and by a 'choice' preceding the

[13] VI.8.2.2–8.

[14] VI.8.1.33–4; Arist. *EN* 1109b30–1110a6. For the relationship of VI.8 to Aristotle's theory, cf. Gerson 1994: 155–63.

[15] III.1.8.14–21. Cf. Bolton 1994: 58–9.

[16] There are two rather different interpretations of προαίρεσις in Plotinus, those of Rist 1975 and Phillips 1995. Rist follows the Aristotelian reading of it as 'choice' or 'deliberate desire for things in our power' (*EN* 1113a), through Epictetus' emphatic usage of προαίρεσις to denote something like 'will' (cf. Long 2002: esp. 210–20), all the way to the Neoplatonists. Phillips disputes the Aristotelian background of the term and emphasises Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's *Resp*. 10 and προαίρεσις as a purposive aspect of intelligising (directly involved with the intelligible universe). Both traces seem to be found in Plotinus: sometimes *proairesis* seems to refer to something like one's choice or will (e.g. in the case of stars at IV.4.35.1–8), at others to something the human soul gains when it comes to live in a body in particular circumstances (III.4.6.10). Plotinus points out in the latter connection also that προαίρεσις entails the possibility of choosing and acting wrongly. Hence it seems that the two traces are intimately interconnected: only a being that can *choose* to act rightly or to 'sin' has true power of choice. As Rist acknowledges, however, the term holds no particular importance or centrality in Plotinus, who more often uses the terminology of, for instance, self-determination.

descent into a body, it may be asked in which sense we are still masters of our choices and actions. Although this kind of 'purposive nature', unlike material causation with its limitations, is mostly a positive phenomenon for Plotinus, it is important to him that it does not govern too much. Particular decisions and actions can be free even if the soul's character and its final destiny are ordained – in fact, our introspection shows this to be the case.[17]

While certain personal characteristics and, to an extent, even the inequality in relation to good and evil are predispositions of the soul, there still remains the possibility for each individual to actualise either the better and higher or the lower aspect of his nature:

> For the soul is many things and all things, both the things above and the things below to the limits of all life, and we are each an intelligible universe (*kosmos noētos*), encountering the things below with that [lower spirit], and the things above and of the cosmos with the intelligible [in us]. (III.4.3.21–4)

First, each human soul is an 'intelligible universe', containing all possibilities of varieties of being and action. Second, despite the predisposition of souls to actualise some part of their nature rather than others, each and every human soul's extension from the lower realm to the intelligible secures that we can identify ourselves with different ontological levels from the realm of sense to that of true being – that is, that there remains space for one's own efforts and choices.[18]

For human agents, self-determination (*to autexousion*) is not an unqualifiedly positive term. It is related to the descent of souls into bodies:

> What is it, then, which has made the souls forget their father, god, and even though they are parts from this higher realm and altogether belong to him, be ignorant both of themselves and of him? The origin of evil for them was audacity (*tolma*) and birth and the first difference and the wish to belong to themselves. Since they appeared to take pleasure in self-determination (*to autexousion*), and to make much use of self-movement, running the opposite way and making the distance as great as possible, they were ignorant even that they were from that realm. (V.1.1.1–9; for intellect, cf. III.8.8.32–8)

Because of Plotinus' understanding of human souls as divine, as having the unfallen part or being in direct contact with the intelligible, he is at pains to explain the fact that human souls are nonetheless embodied and live their lives in the realm of imperfection and evil. If freedom, too, diminishes gradually the further from the One's unbounded freedom and the

[17] III.1.7–8. Cf. Gerson 1994: 158.

[18] Bolton 1994: 77 calls this a volitive centre of the soul which can apply itself in assimilative or conversive manner in different ontological directions.

closer to the necessities of the sensible realm of time and matter one finds oneself in, why is the soul embodied at all? Why does it not actualise solely its divine and unfallen part? Besides the metaphysical necessity of emanation,[19] it would seem that there is no true individuality and particular – as opposed to general or shared – selfhood without imperfection. Since what it is to be a human being involves *individual* self-determination and self-possession, human souls become acquainted with something less than perfection, a space of individual existence and choices that lies between good and evil, perfection and imperfection. For them to constitute themselves as selves by reverting back to their source, they need to become other or different from that source. They have a nature proper to themselves and are self-determined principles or origins (*archē hautē autexousios*; III.2.10.19). Although the context and terminology of our longer quote above have a depreciatory ring, the passage shows how self-possession and self-determination are essential for human selves.

What the passage does not mention are bodies and embodiment, but the clause 'getting as far as possible' very likely refers to the material realm, since matter-evil is furthest away from the good and the One. The body and those functions of the soul that are actualised in contact with it simultaneously present the furthest point of individuality – spatially divided individuals with distinct bodies[20] – as well as the greatest danger of forgetting one's true, higher and free nature. The central problem becomes that of determining an existence which would preserve self-determination and self-possession without embracing all the evils of the embodied state.

4.2. THERAPY OF EMOTIONS AND WHAT IS UP TO US

More often than not, Platonists are classified under the broad heading of dualism. They separate the soul and the body as different kinds of things, and usually locate the selfhood on the side of the soul. Determining which kind of dualism is at work, however, is a difficult task. As far as Plato is concerned, the various dialogues would seem to offer fairly different understandings of the soul–body relationship, ranging from a rather hard dualism all the way to something almost like monism.[21] The body is understood either as a mere tomb or shell of the soul, or as its biological instrument (*organon*), occupying a position in between the soul and other things and

[19] Plotinus believes in the so-called principle of spontaneous, overflowing generation: that perfection, although self-contained, radiates by necessity an activity that manifests its perfect state. Cf. e.g. Rangos 1999.

[20] Cf. chapter 6. [21] Robinson 2000.

instruments in the world (*Alc*. I. 129d–130c), or even, as in the *Charmides* (156d–e), as a part of the whole person. The divergence of this background colours Plotinus' statements about the issue, although in general he seems to opt for harsher views about the significance of the body for selfhood. Derivatively, this means also a rather grim view of the value of those functions of the soul that are closest to the body, and belong to the composite rather than to the individual soul.

Plotinus is notorious for advocating *metriopatheia* only as a necessary means to a higher state, *apatheia*, a full-fledged extirpation of emotions. Human being, and as we shall soon see, self, is demarcated as something in which the body is not included, nor are emotions. Moreover, emotions are not merely outside the true self, but they are regarded as something that makes us somehow lesser beings than we could be without them. It may be asked what Plotinus' notion of self is like if we follow the implications of this radically intellectualistic view. If I am first and foremost not just my soul but the rational part of my soul, are emotions wholly external to the real me? And if so, is that a psychologically plausible account of the self? The challenge of understanding the reasons for Plotinus' radical view will motivate this section. It focuses on the role of emotions in Plotinus' philosophy of the self.

Interestingly enough, both Plato and Plotinus strive to give a picture of an autonomous or self-determining agent, who is a responsible, harmonious and coherent person governed by rational deliberation. What differs, rather, is the way in which they believe that such a state can be achieved. I will both open and conclude with the topic of self-constitution. By this I do not mean just self-determination, understood as a person's capacity to determine by and for himself what he wants or how he prefers to think or act. Self-constitution refers to the whole process of deliberating, choosing to act and think in certain ways, and thereby constituting one's life and personality – one's self. Thus, self-constitution may depend on the capacity of self-determination but it is not the same thing. We shall first see Plato connect autonomous action with self-constitution, while Plotinus insists that true autonomy can only be found in pure deliberation, and that the suggested self-constitution is only the second-best option. His therapy of emotions gives a central role to rational self-realisation. The introspection and ethical improvement he advocates are not concentrated on the evaluation and inspection of our motivations or actions in the moral sphere of which other people are a part, but are, rather, an internal realisation of oneself as a pure reasoning capacity. Rather than focusing on our everyday choices, actions or relations to others, it is connected to the attainment of true

knowledge, inner beauty and unity. This view becomes more compelling once we realise that the end of this self-realisation is an ideally autonomous entity who would be entirely unconstrained and self-determining, and who would base his actions on infallible knowledge.

Platonic background

Any Platonic account of the soul that divides our behavioural motivation into two or more parts, that is, roughly, into reason and appetite, or reason, appetite and spirit, can be understood in two radically different ways. On one interpretation reason and emotion are seen in perpetual and unavoidable conflict in which the role of reason is to suppress, control and rule emotional elements of the soul. Without reason, these elements are by their nature irrational and tending to excess. To borrow Christine Korsgaard's[22] distinction, this can be called the Combat model, and it seems to lurk in the background of many accounts of Platonic psychology. But the non-rational soul-parts or, rather, aspects, can also be understood as genuine parts of the self, in which case the role of reason is not primarily to suppress the other parts but to organise the soul in such a way that it becomes unified and integrated. Action springs from the whole person in harmony with itself. This Korsgaard, for reasons that will become clear later, calls the Self-Constitution model. Another way of putting broadly the same problem is to ask whether the Platonic psycho-ethical ideal is conscious control of one part (or set of parts) by another or the unforced cohesion of the parts.[23]

Plato's dialogues offer ample evidence for both views. To take the Combat model first, the somewhat paradoxical idea of controlling or ruling oneself (*auton heautou archein*) introduced, for instance, in the *Gorgias* (491d–e), is explained as one part's, namely reason's, rule over the other parts. Reason's role is described using the terminology of rule, management and control. This suggests that reason is not on the same footing with other behavioural motivations. In the *Republic*, self-control (*encrateia*) is explicitly described as the control of the better part over the worse.[24] From the moral point of view, at least, reason is better or above the other sources of motivation. The same holds for its special capacities: reason is not just the capacity for rational reflection but also for rule. Pleasures, for instance, are in themselves without understanding, rationale or capacity for long-term planning, and thereby dependent on rational deliberation. Moreover, the vocabulary used

[22] Korsgaard 1999. [23] Gill 1996: 245. [24] *Resp*. 430e–1a.

of reason's control in the *Republic* suggests always no gentle management on reason's part.

There may also be philosophical reason to elevate reason as special for selfhood. The relation of bodily appetites to selfhood seems very different from that of reason. As the talk of being 'enslaved' or 'overcome' by pleasures and appetites suggests, there is something in these states that makes the self a passive recipient rather than an active participant. Reasoning is altogether different. In the Platonic way of thinking, endorsing a proposition is not something that passively happens to the agent, but something in which he is actively involved, and as such it can be seen as expressing more directly the agent's true selfhood.[25] Not only is reason described as the entity using real power in the human being, it is also that part of the human being which has the strongest claim to selfhood.

The second, the Self-Constitution model, relies partly on a different interpretation of the same passages, but especially on a few highly interesting passages. When depicting different kinds of souls (in book 8), Plato dismisses as *unjust* a soul in which reason treats other parts of the soul as slaves. A soul in which other behavioural motivations are not persuaded or trained to co-operate together with reason, but rather where reason must hold them in check, is an unjust and hence a sick soul. In such a soul, reason's rule does not consist of persuading or taming the other parts with good arguments. It is based, rather, on compulsion and fear.[26] A reasonable or temperate (*sōphrōn*) soul is characterised 'by the friendship and harmony of these parts, when the ruling and the two ruled parts agree that the rational part should rule and not engage in factional strife with it'.[27] In the light of this passage, the Combat model does not describe a normal or healthy state of the soul. Such a sickness of the soul may be common, but it is an unwelcome abnormality.

Let me quote another famous and lengthy passage of Plato's *Republic* book 4, on what justice in the human soul comprises:

> And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However, it is not concerned with someone's doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is *his own friend, and harmonises the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale – high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and many others there may be in between, and from having been many things*

[25] Gerson 2002: 106. [26] *Resp*. 554c–d. [27] *Resp*. 442c–d.

he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act. (443c–e; trans. by G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve)

Here Plato brings together several central points about selfhood and autonomy. First, in addition to the well-known definition of justice as each part doing its own task, the passage describes the relation between the parts as a unified harmony, and not combat. Different motivations may not be on the same level – this, presumably, is the purport of the musical scales – but their relation to one another ought to be peaceful. In the same vein, the relation of the self towards itself is described in terms of harmony and friendship. Second, although this is a normative claim about what a good human soul looks like, it is not just a description of a morally ideal soul. Plato's view seems to be that only a harmonious soul is truly some one thing, whereas a soul in which the different motivations are in combat is something many. This brings us to his view of selfhood, sometimes described as aspirational:[28] to be a self is not a given, not something we have regardless of normative ends. It is a part of human nature to have potentially conflicting motivations, but in order to be some one thing and not, as it were, several selves this conflict ought to be overcome.

The same requirement for unification is repeated in connection with the oligarchic soul in which reason rules by compulsion: 'Then someone like that would not be entirely free from internal civil war and *would not be one but in some way two*, though in general his better desires are in control of his worse' (554d–e trans. by G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve). In an ideally unified state all motivations work together, without internal conflict or suppression, towards the same ends. For the most part, these ends would, admittedly, be approved, perhaps even formulated by reason, but for them to be ends for the whole person would require that the other motivations consider them as ends, too. One way or the other, they should be receptive to reason's rule. Such a state would be our true self in the sense that (1) none of the motivations belonging to human beings is ignored or delineated as alien to selfhood, that is, none of them is externalised; (2) even though the motivations are characterised as having their own ends and functions (sometimes even their own pleasures), they form some one thing. They belong as parts to a whole. If they are not in agreement, one could provocatively claim, they belong to a whole only in an (ethically) uninteresting sense that they all happen within some one body.

[28] This often involves a distinction between endowed/given and achieved/constructed selfhood, and/or an emphasis that, for persons, to be one and to have identity is an honorific title. Gerson 2002: 9, 11; McCabe 1994: chapter 9; Nehamas 1998: e.g., 4.

Furthermore, it is the unified soul that can be said to be the true agent. Only after binding the parts of his soul together, the quote said, does the good man act. This is so for two different but complementary reasons. First, in a radical combat situation the person may fail to achieve any decision on how it would be proper to act. I am now thinking of situations such as where one feels unable to decide over something. Some of these situations may be characterised as internal to reason – i.e. there are good reasons for many kinds of behaviour – but others seem to be cases in which a strong desire to perform a certain act is juxtaposed with rational deliberation of not doing it, resulting in a postponement of the difficult, final decision – perhaps even in complete inactivity. In the Combat model, this problem is overcome by reason's enforced rule. The second point shows, however, that this cannot be an ideal solution to internal conflicts. In a person whose soul still has internal conflicts but who has found enough agreement to act in one way or the other, the action expresses only part of what he wants.

Combat reading of Platonic psychology, then, runs the risk of failing to give us a true, unified agent. Most states of the soul would be ones in which reason rules the other parts without their consent, that is, simply suppresses the motivational impulses they send, and the whole person or even most of his 'parts' would hardly ever be involved in any action. Either reason would act on its own or the person would act according to some desire, against his own deliberation. But Plato makes abundantly clear that the contribution of the so-called lower parts is necessary for action. It is hard to imagine what this positive role of non-rational motivations could be if they were chiefly reason's enemies or at best its mindless slaves. If the behavioural motivations are delineated outside that which decides and chooses between them, they are externalised from the agent, and it becomes, in fact, very questionable what or who in the end is the agent in the human being. For these reasons Plato in at least some passages seems to prefer a model where the soul-parts are organised and unified into a system that yields an action that can be attributed to the whole person rather than to any part of him. The process towards this end is normative self-constitution.[29] This process not only relies on some basic level of self-determination, it also increases the freedom and autonomy of the agent by unifying different urges as aspects into a controlled whole. Through this model, it has been suggested, Plato succeeds in giving an interesting picture of what it is to be a self and an agent, and what it is for action to flow from a single source responsible for it.

[29] The above-mentioned article by Christine Korsgaard (1999) includes an exposition of the meaning which the treatment of behavioural motivations has for selfhood and agency.

For the Neoplatonists, the tripartite model of the soul may not play a central role, but the rational and non-rational motivations still have their significant roles and potential conflicts to play out. Plotinus tends towards an estrangement between the parts rather than towards their efficacious co-operation. In his theory of emotions, he seems to be an adherent of the Combat model, or perhaps something even more radical that I will come to call a Purification model. This will pose a challenge to his understanding of what it is to be a self and an agent. If the Self-Constitution model yields us a view of what it is to be a unitary self with motivations as real, different and gripping as reason, emotion, desire, bodily impulses, etc., as well as a coherent picture of autonomous action, why would Plotinus abandon this account? At the outset, his choice would seem to lead to all the potential problems of the Combat model: of having an inhuman view of humanity as something purely rational, that is, of externalising motivations that seem genuine parts of ourselves, and finally in general of misunderstanding the whole point of different motivations and their role in agency.

In terms of the historical background, there is nothing strange if these were, in fact, Plotinus' views. His philosophy grows outwards from the Middle-Platonic reading of Plato. That interpretation emphasises those passages in Plato where happiness is seen as something that transcends our humanity, rather than in terms of our lives as flesh-and-blood human beings. But regardless of the intellectual atmosphere of the era, we are entitled to expect Plotinus to address at least some of the above worries. Moreover, his view should fit at least into his own philosophical system. Here, too, some problems may emerge. Plotinus agrees with Plato that in order to be a self one ought to be as unified as possible. Just like his teacher, he believes that the worst kind of situation is when the soul is dragged in different directions by different motivations, and thus not properly unified. At least as a normative goal, unity has force in his overall theory. I will proceed to argue that his solution is to identify the most unified and autonomous motivation rather than the whole agent with several different but unified motivations. This move is especially clear in the context of Plotinus' discussion on emotions.

Emotions

It has become customary to talk about emotions in the context of ancient philosophy. The word translated as 'emotion' is *pathos*, which means, rather simply, an undergoing of something as a result of an action on the part of something else. They are affections that arise from a contact with something

else. Thus many philosophers thought that, for instance, perceptions are *pathē*. Ancient philosophers do, however, seem to recognise a special group of these affections, namely emotions or passions of the soul, although often both pleasure and pain are included in this group, beyond just feelings of joy, sadness etc. As something powerful, disturbing and often irrational, this group was considered especially challenging for philosophical therapy.

Explaining emotions in a philosophically and psychologically satisfactory way posed several problems for Plotinus. First, he thought that the soul itself must not be genuinely affected by anything. Following Plato's *Phaedo*, soul should not undergo any real change because what is changeable is destructible.[30] Second, soul should not be affected by what is in an ontologically lower position than itself, that is, for example, the material body, since in Plotinus' metaphysics causation is from the higher to the lower. And yet emotions would seem to violate both these laws: the very word *pathos*, or the verb *paschein* suggest a change, an alteration or an affection that the subject undergoes. Contrary to the metaphysical hierarchy, many emotions are accompanied or even originated by irrational bodily movements or elements, and both the bodily movements and the emotions themselves would seem to inflict a change on the soul.

One of Plotinus' challenges is, therefore, to give a plausible account of the soul which is *not* genuinely affected in the so-called affections of the soul. He meets this challenge by consigning all genuine changes to the body and by arguing that what happens in the soul is not genuine change but an activity. The idea of shame, for instance, is in the soul, but the feeling itself is identified as a bodily state.[31] In a genuine alteration, that which changes acquires a new property, whereas both perceptions and emotions do not change the soul in this respect. The perceptual *faculty* is not changed in perception. Furthermore, emotions are closely connected to the organism which includes both body and soul, and especially to the so-called vegetative soul responsible for functions that involve the body in different ways. For Plotinus, the aspects of this soul are sometimes described as 'traces' of the soul as opposed to the soul itself. Whatever happens in the body is due to the soul but it is not the soul itself in the body that undergoes anything. The soul is an independent and pure activity or power, and its physical expression ought to be understood as a separate thing.[32]

Plotinus makes a further distinction which will later become useful for our purposes. There are two kinds of emotions, those that result from

[30] III.6.1.28–30; Pl. *Phd*. 78b–79c.
[31] III.6.1.30–7; 3.1–15. For emotions in Plotinus, see Emilsson 1998.
[32] III.6.4.34–52; IV.4.17.19–23; 18.19–25.

belief or opinion and those that are caused by bodily movements. The emotions that do not arise from belief fall into two sub-categories. Some affections arise from perceptions of external things without going through the belief-forming state. Others, like hunger, may originate solely from the body and its needs without any beliefs or perceptions of the external world.[33] By emphasising the active part of the vegetative soul in emotion and by acknowledging the role of both belief and the bodily in emotions, Plotinus mediates between two extremes. Emotions are not something that happens in our body without any involvement of thought, but neither are they simply rational.

That emotions have an irrational side to them points already to the fact that Plotinus will consider them as potentially problematic. His strong mistrust of emotions follows along familiar lines of thought present in most of ancient philosophy. Emotions are a force that the agent has difficulty in controlling. Like the desire for pleasure, they are dangerous because they have the power to momentarily enslave the soul, to force all our behavioural motivations to function for the ends they happen to pursue or direct us towards. Without the rule and control of reason these ends may not turn out to be for the best for the whole person in the long run.[34] But Plotinus goes further than many ancient philosophers. Together with the Stoics he believes that what is dangerous is not just uncontrollable desire for pleasure but almost all, if not all, emotion. He maintains that we should get rid of emotions altogether, but, he hastens to add, if it is not wholly possible, then at least divest ourselves of their emotional excitement (I.2.5.9–15). What is most objectionable is to give in to the involuntary, non-deliberate element (*to aproaireton*; line 14) in emotion. This element should be recognised as a smaller part of emotion actually belonging to something or someone else, that is, the body and the irrational soul. The latter two are liable to be affected by drugs, magic and other external impulses, and it is both the ability and the task of the rational soul not to assent to the affections of the lower soul and the body. The rational soul should not suffer or get angry together with the body, but realise that the body's impulses are fundamentally foreign to itself. The irrational part of the soul should be influenced by reason, not the other way round.[35]

[33] III.6.2.60–7; IV.4.28.19–21, 35–53.

[34] The ways and contexts in which Plotinus describes emotions sound familiar from the many ancient discussions about bodily pleasures. Emotions, like pleasures, 'take the lead', they 'push us around' or 'enslave' us as masters over us (III.6.4.12; VI.8.1.22–7). Violent desires are said to 'drive and drag the soul about' (III.1.9.15–16).

[35] I.2.5.21–31; IV.4.43.1–10.

So the 'control' of emotions depends, in a sense, on reason's not reacting together with the non-deliberate element. The freedom of reason is the capacity to do differently from what the bodily impulses or emotional elements suggest. Reason can disagree with the appearances they give rise to, and thereby withhold its authorisation, judgement, choosing to react differently.[36]

The general idea sounds similar to the Stoic therapy of emotions. Bodily movements and emotionally exciting appearances should not be acquiesced to. Plotinus usually refrains from using the Stoic vocabulary of 'assenting' (that is, the terminology of *sunkatathesis*, I.8.14.4, or the verb *epineuein*, to nod in assent; used, however, in IV.4.43.6), even though in other contexts he may embrace Stoic terminology without hesitation. This is likely the case because the vocabulary of assenting is tied too strongly to the Stoic understanding of emotions as completely rational, whereas for a Platonist, as we have seen, it is often the non-deliberate element that gives rise to emotion. And this is not something you assent to or withhold your assent from because it is not something you can discuss or reason with. Since the non-rational element is, by definition, not a judgement, assenting is not an appropriate verb with which to refer to the reason's response to it. The non-rational elements remain outside reason's jurisdiction, and are therefore always foreign to it, and potentially uncontrollable.

Precisely because it is impossible to reason with non-rational motivations, the therapy Plotinus recommends for them is separation (*chōrismos*) and purification (*katharsis*). The soul should separate itself from the body which is not a genuine part of oneself. Once such separation is complete, the soul is purified from the body and everything connected to it, and thereby also free of those emotions that originate in the body, as well as of the bodily side or feeling of all emotions.[37]

Purification is described as follows:

> Since the soul is evil when it is combined with the body and becomes such that it is similarly affected and agrees in all opinions with the body, it ought to be good and possess virtue when it no longer agrees in [its] opinions but *acts alone* – this is intellection and wisdom (*noein kai phronein*) – and is not similarly affected [as the body] – this is reasonableness – and is not afraid of departing from the body – this is courage – and is ruled by reason and intellect, without resistance – and this is justice. (I.2.3.10–19. Cf. I.6.6.1–10; *Phd.* 69b–c.)

The Platonic virtues of reasonableness or self-control and justice have a new content within Plotinus' discussion of purification and separation from the

[36] To judge, ἐπικρίνειν; I.1.9.8–12. [37] I.6.5.54–8; II.3.9.19–24.

body and all that is bodily in nature.[38] The virtues in question are the so-called purificatory virtues, or, rather purifications. Limiting desires and emotions belongs to the so-called civic virtues (*aretai politikai*) which are preparatory and secondary to the true purified state. These two kinds of virtue recapitulate *Phaedo*'s purification of the soul from the body that leads to knowledge as well as the popular and social virtue 'developed by habit and practice, without philosophy or understanding' (67a–d; 82b). The civic virtues consist of agreement between affection and reason,[39] something like the *metriopatheia*, whereas on the higher level purification and fully-fledged Stoic *apatheia* become the central notions.[40] What is emphasised is that reason acts alone. Only the soul which does not share with the body or with any of soul's irrational experiences is wholly good. The 'virtuousness' of this kind of soul is not in any harmony of parts, but in its solitary activity. In the process, the person does not externalise anything truly belonging to itself, but an element foreign to itself (*allotrion*; I.2.4.6).

So while Plotinus agrees with Plato that, on a certain level, reason's role is to control the affections, and that this control is based on its knowledge of what are, for instance, the good pleasures,[41] there are also departures from Plato's teachings. In Plato, friendship, agreement and harmony can still, at times, be seen as descriptions of the inner state of a truly virtuous soul with different but harmoniously co-operating motivations. For Plotinus, the same notions are demoted to the level of action, whereas true goodness consists of getting rid of potentially discordant non-rational motivations. He employs the radical stand of the *Phaedo*, reappearing in a less dramatic context in the *Alcibiades* I, that the soul on its own is the self, and that one's own body is external to the true self. The body is a tool or a beautiful house of the soul, but not the true self. Man himself, Plotinus says, is not his *outward* parts, but the soul. Nor is the compound of soul and body the self in the primary sense. One's body is one's own, and therefore its pains and states are of concern to us, but on the strict notion of 'self', they are not parts of the 'self'. Accordingly, also bodily affections belong to the ensouled body, not to the true self.[42] As we saw above, at least the irrational bodily side of emotion is outside the real 'me'.

[38] That Plotinus' account of the stages of virtue attempts to deal with the heterogeneous Platonic heritage (the tripartite soul of the *Republic*, the austere soul of the *Phaedo* and the *homoiōsis theō* doctrine of the *Theaetetus* 176a–b) is argued by Dillon 1983.

[39] I.2.1.18–19.

[40] For these states as the goals of emotional education in Platonism, cf. Knuuttila 2004: chapter I.8.

[41] I.4.2.19–25; I.2.2.13–18.

[42] *Phd.* 115c–e; *Alc.* I 129c–131a; I.1.7.14–18; 4.14.1–8, 13–14; II.3.9.30–1; 15.25–8; IV.4.18.10–19; 7.1.20–5.

Furthermore, not even all functions of the soul belong to the real 'me'. Plotinus revises the Platonic tripartite psychology and accommodates it with Aristotelianism. The soul has different faculties of which, as we have seen, some seem to be connected to the so-called first ensoulment. Thought, appearance and perhaps perception belong to that phase of ensoulment which is connected to the individual or higher soul, whereas several other functions belong to the so-called vegetative soul. Given their close connection to the body and to the living organism, the emotions have much more to do with the vegetative soul and its functions than with what is the true self, the inner core of the human being.[43] They are not primarily functions of what has been called 'individual soul' or 'higher soul', that is, the subject of cognitive activities.[44]

To distinguish Plotinus' view from both interpretations of Plato, let us call his model a Purification model, since for him, reason not merely suppresses other behavioural motivations but ideally it grows to disregard them altogether. The extent of this purification is not altogether clear. Some passages suggest that the apathetic state of the soul might be one in which the lower parts of the soul actually continue to have emotions, while the rational man does not pay direct attention to them. The bodily composite has a life of its own with necessities that must be satisfied. For reasons that will become more evident in the next section, it is unlikely that he would have been thinking of some kind of true double-man in which reason and the composite would live lives entirely their own. At the very least, the emotions of the composite would have to be moderate or suppressed enough not to prompt the body into wrong kind of action nor give rise to untruthful opinions and beliefs. What seems evident is that no positive role is left for emotion in an adult life. Certain bodily functions need to happen more or less automatically to keep the composite alive, but real emotional reactions are not the sort of thing the wise man indulges in, nor does he identify himself with bodily desires.[45]

The detailed reasons for Plotinus' rejection of the more moderate understanding of the role of body and emotions in a human life will be the issue of subsequent sections. I wish here to note his overall dislike of unity

[43] We have seen in chapter 1 (pp. 26–30) how Plotinus follows the *Timaeus* in which the demiurge himself gives humans the principle of the soul, whereas passions, moral character and characteristic actions are given by the lesser gods.

[44] Emilsson 1998. Cf. Gerson 1994: 150.

[45] I.4.4.26–30; III.6.5.15–26; Plotinus does give a self-preserving role to the bodily organs and sense; VI.7.1.1–5.

consisting of parts, and one important consequence of it. The fact that the highest place in the Plotinian hierarchy is taken by an absolute One that consists of no parts already gives an important indication of the kind of unities Plotinus thinks are really one. Let us imagine a soul that has attained virtue as wholly as possible without engaging in anything like true purification. According to the Self-Constitution model, such a person would still have bodily impulses and emotions, but his reason would keep watch over them and the passionate parts of the soul would agree to its beneficent rule. Plotinus, however, mistrusts the stability of this agreement as well as the power of habituation over the irrational soul and body. As we have seen, his dualism takes seriously the idea that the involuntary or non-deliberate element is utterly foreign to the rational soul, and thereby, as it were, outside its jurisdiction. For this reason alone it is liable to be an uneasy partner in any harmonious co-existence. And even if the rational part could coexist with the irrational part and somehow negotiate or advise it for the well-being of the whole, the virtuous state understood as harmony between the different motivations would rely on continuous negotiation between the parts. Any apparent unity would, in fact, conceal an ongoing reassessment of the functions of each part in the well-being of the whole. Each new action requires a decision over where the borderline goes at the moment. This kind of virtuous state is not, Plotinus believes, a genuine disposition for the good. The soul may be harmonious, but its harmony relies on agreement between different parts (I.2.6.19–27). Virtue is constituted, if not by actions, then by the decisions to act, or to be more precise, continuous particular agreements between the parts. In all likelihood, recurring decisions for the good would create something like dispositions, but these would never be stable and reliable.

The point of purification – whatever we think of the possibilities of ever succeeding in it – is to dissociate oneself from the alien element and thereby to stop listening to its suggestions altogether. The purified and separated soul will not negotiate with other motivations but deal with them quickly and efficiently. Once attained, this state would have the required stability. Its harmony relies on the fact that it is truly unitary, that is, not composed of potentially discordant parts.

Negative freedom

In Plotinus' view, emotions have a more serious flaw than that of irrationality in the sense of an incapacity for long-term plans and an ordered life.

This is the fact that emotions tie us to the external world which is beyond our control. The negative take on emotions belongs to a wider opposition of external vis-à-vis internal, laid out, for instance, in the following passage:

> Of men some are born of the powers of the whole and of external circumstances, as if spell-bound, and are little or nothing themselves. Others rule these [circumstances] and transcend them, so to speak, by their heads, towards the higher realm and beyond the soul, and so restore the psychic substance's best and ancient part. (II.3.15.13–17)

As is evident from this passage (and from others of a similar sort),[46] by this point in ancient philosophy, the division into an external world and its circumstances and an internal world that pertains to the human self is well ingrained, despite what so many scholars have argued.[47] But the distinction has to be qualified in two ways. First, contrary to what one might expect, the body is understood largely as belonging to the external world. We have seen that in the Platonic tradition of the *Alcibiades* I, as well as in Plotinus, it has significance as a worldly *tool* (*organon*) closest to our true selves, but it is nonetheless not a *part* of the true self. Second, the above quotation already alludes to a tendency to consider the inner as taking part in the higher metaphysical hierarchies, and it should not thereby be confused with an early modern or, more precisely, a Lockean internal space separated from the external. Internal is to an extent one's own (*idios, idion*),[48] but nonetheless not primarily a subjective or a closed realm. In an ideal case, the self is separated from the external world of change and matter, but not from the realm that is its perfect paradigm, the intelligible universe. The connection to the world is preserved in a paradigmatic mode. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition of inner and outer and, as we shall also see, agent and patient, recurs often.

As something that acquires an impulse from external sources and affects the body, the emotions are in danger of making the person a passive recipient rather than an active subject. Even with Plotinus' skilful moves to show the active part that the soul plays in emotion, the fact remains that they are, in different ways, caused or aroused by, or dependent on external things. This

[46] Right after this passage, in lines 17–24, Plotinus juxtaposes affections as coming from outside and a nature that the soul has on its own (*oikeia phusis*). In VI.8.6.19–23 outside is contrasted with inner activity.

[47] Taylor 1989: e.g., 121 attributes the first use of this distinction to Augustine, who, of course, was heavily influenced by the Stoics as well as Plotinus.

[48] The term is sometimes used to describe one's own mental functionings. Plotinus distinguishes, for example, our own memories and those that are common; IV.3.27.3.

holds both for those emotions that result from belief or opinion and for those that are caused by bodily movements.[49] I will next explore Plotinus' emphasis on this dependency.

In the tradition stemming from Aristotle, absence of constraint is necessary – but not sufficient – for an action to be free. By Kant, something like this is called negative freedom, or freedom of the will, that is, the capacity to work independently of determinations by alien causes. In antiquity, the term 'up to us' (*eph' hēmin*) referred, broadly, to actions that were not impeded by anything external to the agent. This use probably starts with Aristotle, but it develops and receives more of an emphasis in several Stoic authors and, finally, in Plotinus.[50] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 3 (1112a31), Aristotle uses it for things that people want or deliberate about. His point is, among other things, that no one, for instance, wishes eternal or other things that one has no control over. The term recurs over and over again, especially in Epictetus. Epictetus, who taught philosophy approximately a hundred years before Plotinus, anchored his practical advice about the morals of action on a divide between what is ours and what is external to us (*ta exō* or *ta allotria*; Epict. *Diss*. 4.12.15–19 = LS 66F). 'Some things are up to us, while others are not' begins his manual (*Ench*. 1).

Epictetus claims that those things under our control include conception, impulse, desire, aversion and, in general, everything that is our own doing (*hosa hēmetera erga*). Those things beyond our control include our body, our property, reputation, office and, in general, everything that is not our own doing (*hosa ouch hēmetera erga*). By nature the things that are up to us are free and unimpeded, whereas the things not up to us are servile, hindered and not our own.[51] It is interesting that according to Epictetus, things that happen in the sphere of moral action and other people are not up to us, nor are things connected with the body. Plotinus seems to hold a very similar view. He states that in the sphere of action, a pure state of 'being up to us' is impossible.[52] Plotinus, like Epictetus, also places the body firmly outside one's true self. The body is subject to a number of necessities beyond our control and therefore ultimately external to us.[53]

One major disagreement between the Stoics and Plotinus concerns emotions. In the model where soul is unitary and solely rational, emotions are

[49] IV.4.28.22–6, 39–43. [50] For a full treatment of this development, Eliasson 2005.
[51] E.g. Epict. *Ench*. 1; Long 2002: 207–22.
[52] VI.8.2.33–7. As Plato suggests in the *Timaeus*, the realm of becoming is an offspring of a union of Intellect and Necessity (47e–48a).
[53] It has been suggested that Plotinus knew Epictetus' work. Graeser 1972.

seen as rational because they are identical with beliefs and false judgements made by reason. Therefore desires, emotions and choices all belong to the group of things that are up to us.[54] As has already become clear, Plotinus believes that emotions are not wholly dependent on the judgements of reason and thereby not entirely up to us. According to one interpretation, there is the following shift from Chrysippus to Epictetus: in Chrysippus' view, each thing that we do unhindered, that is, that we assent to and that is not hindered by anything else, is up to us or in our power. For Epictetus, however, this holds only for those things which *could* not be hindered. That is, the things up to us are things that could in no situation be externally hindered or forced. His concern is thus to find the realm of things that in no circumstances could be prevented or affected by things external to ourselves.[55] Note that Epictetus' requirement is very strong. It is not easy to come up with actions that are in no circumstances hindered by external things. In fact, only our internal rational agency may qualify. This strong reading, I will argue, is very close to Plotinus' view. The attempt to find that realm of things in which the soul is never, as Plotinus says, 'spell-bound', but works entirely free will lead him to suspect both the emotions and the realm of action and perception in general.

In Plotinus' view, the external realm misdirects us in at least four different ways: First, through perception man is joined to the sensible reality of time and matter. In the first chapter I argued that the fact that sensible things exist in the realm of time and generation and destruction, that is, change, makes not only our own bodies but the identity of the objects of our perception flowing and unreliable, and therefore not good enough for knowledge. Plotinus notes also that the changing situations of the surrounding world render it impossible to concentrate long on the same issue. Moreover, the external world not only fills our mind with external stimuli, through perceptions it also determines most of the contents of our (discursive) thoughts. Through perception, the particular circumstances one finds oneself in affect one's inner life. Even a rational man is not wholly independent of external circumstances.[56] Discursive thinking is hindered by discontinuity and lack of order resulting from the changing external impulses.

Second, the body has its changing needs connected to external things. By the need to eliminate hunger the hungry person finds himself dependent

[54] E.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.6–7, 11–16; Plut. *Mor. De virt. mor.* 446E–447A; Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 4.2.8–12.

[55] Bobzien 1998: 332. [56] III.1.7.14–16; IV.4.17.1–11.

on external circumstances quite regardless of the independent origin of the desire itself. Importantly, Plotinus recognises the impact of all this on discursive thinking. Both bodily needs and emotions continually subject us to different appearances and thereby also to changing beliefs and opinions. The inconstant opinions and the demands to satisfy the needs arising from the body cause *aporia*, that is, perplexity about the courses of action one should choose. When uncontrolled, emotions hinder the reasoning part from functioning properly.[57] Through the body, its needs and dispositions to emotion, our mental states are tied to an ever-changing outside world.[58]

Third, the power of emotions to 'drag the soul about' relies on the very nature of appearance. In Plotinus, as in the Stoics, embodied human mental states consist of appearances. Appearances make perceptions complete, and they are thereby involved in the bodily desires and needs, but those thoughts that are not about perceptibles also occur through appearances. They mediate between the thinker and the object of thought. In general, this faculty creates a gap between the thinker and his thoughts, between the mind that becomes the forms it thinks, and those forms themselves. It is at this level, too, that mistakes occur. For example, I may perceive something and wrongly represent it as, say, a snake, and therefore feel fear. If one believes one is in danger, that belief in the rational soul may lead to an emotion of fear in the living body. Some emotions do not arise from beliefs, but rather directly from perceptions of external things without going through the belief-forming state. Their dependence on external things seems even stronger: there is no intermediate state of belief in which consideration or reflection would be possible. Plotinus emphasises that even when we happen to reason rightly about some one thing, unless we have a wider perspective (provided, presumably, by dialectic and the intellect) and know why the reasoning was right, we are not self-determined. Because the faculty of appearance, with its strong ties to the body and the external world, does not belong to the things up to us, beliefs that it has given rise to can be right only by chance.[59]

One special kind of misguided appearance is mentioned by Plotinus in a context where he claims that even emotions which are directed towards one's family are mistaken:

[57] IV.4.17.5, 11–17; cf. also I.8.4.17–20.
[58] For similar ideas in Plato's *Symposium*, 207d–208a; Sorabji 1999: 18; Sedley 1999: 310.
[59] VI.8.3.1–10.

But what about the memories of friends and children and wife? Of our country, and all the things it would not be out of place for a cultivated man to remember? While it [the faculty of appearance][60] remembers each of these with emotion, he would have his memories of them without emotion; for perhaps the emotion was in it [= the appearance] from the beginning and of the emotions those that are cultivated pass to the good soul, in as much as it communicates with the other one. (IV.3.32.1–6)

Plotinus is discussing his somewhat exceptional theory of two kinds of faculties of appearance, one belonging to the lower soul, the other to the higher, individual soul, for even this soul can have memories and must therefore have some kind of faculty of appearance.[61] Emotion, Plotinus says in this context in passing, can be in or belong to the faculty of appearance (meaning here presumably the lower one). He leaves again unclear in which way this is the case, whether an emotion corresponds to some further proposition or whether it is something less elaborate.

In placing emotions in the faculty of appearance, Plotinus, very likely, again combines Platonism with Stoicism, even though he disagrees with both on the value of perceptions and appearances. The family example appears in both Plato and in Epictetus.[62] On a more doctrinal level, Socrates argues in the *Philebus* that judgement, which is based on perception and memory, is turned into a picture in the soul. These images may be correct or not, depending on the belief, and it is they that direct our desires for pleasures (*Phil.* 38b–9e). The Stoics may have divided appearances into theoretical and 'impulsive', *phantasiai hormētikai*. The latter present things as to be desired or avoided. Moreover, Galen reports Posidonius[63] to have suggested that judgements alone are not enough to arouse emotion. A *phantasia* is needed. To feel fear one has to have a mind picture, not just a proposition of the danger one is in.[64] Accordingly, the proper therapy of emotions was considered to be the examination and test of misleading appearances.

[60] The term *phantasia* is not mentioned in the text, but it is clear from the earlier discussion (IV. 3.31) that that is what is referred to.

[61] The section is quite interesting, as Plotinus expends great effort in explaining how it is possible that despite the two souls and two faculties of appearance, we are one and our conscious experience is also unified rather than two-layered. This happens, in the ideal case, by seamless co-operation of the two powers. IV.3.31.9–20; 32.5–10. Cf. pp. 197–8.

[62] E.g. Pl. *Resp.* 387d–e and Epict. *Ench.* 7; 14.

[63] That Plotinus seems to have been familiar with Posidonius is argued by Graeser 1972.

[64] Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 5.6.24–5. Cf. Sorabji 2000: 114–16. Posidonius' view may have been unorthodox or Platonising. Unfortunately it is impossible here to go deeper into the interesting question of the role of *phantasia* in emotion in Stoicism.

Our text passage is not enough to testify what exactly the role and function of appearance is according to Plotinus, but he does think that appearances can be 'emotional'. They represent perceptions in an emotion-triggering way. They are vulnerable to the blows coming from outside.[65] Appearances seem to be inseparable from the emotions they give rise to, and one should try to get rid of not just the emotional part of the emotion, but the appearance that triggered it in the first place. The clue to the therapy of emotions lies in the faculty of appearance, in waking up from its misleading images.[66]

Fourth, emotions are also in a different sense originated from outside the person who has them. Plotinus says, for example, that irrational *pathē* are partly due to the influence of parents, and soul's temperament can also be affected by the surroundings the person lives in.[67] Whether a man is easily irascible may be at least partly due to an outside influence. He may have inherited an easily boiling blood, or perhaps culture, his upbringing and other external circumstances have had their effects on his disposition to get angry. It is noteworthy that Plotinus recognises the twofold source of emotions: the 'innate' or parentally endowed side, and its developmental or environmental formulation. But all this makes Plotinus ever more suspicious towards emotions and embodied selfhood. One's past, the inherited bodily nature and even previous incarnations affect the way the embodied person turns out to be and the way in which he acts, thus undermining his autonomy.

The boundaries of the self seem dependent on the distinction, common in ancient philosophy, between (1) things that the agent does himself and (2) necessary affections a person undergoes.[68] For example the things that have an affect on the characters and destinies of human beings can be divided into those which we do ourselves, and those that happen by necessity.[69] Properly 'inside' and one's own are things in which one is actively participating, whereas from outside come affections and influences over which the agent may not have control.[70] Those actions that are carried out by the person and that do not merely happen in or to him express the truest nature of the person, his true self.

[65] I 2.5.20–1.; 8.15.18.

[66] III.6.5. This leaves Plotinus free to think that some appearances are more accurate than others and can be used – after all, before ascent to the intelligible all thought by necessity will use appearances. But in general, he mistrusts a representational relation to the objects of thought and perception.

[67] III.1.5.11–14.

[68] τίνα μὲν ἡμεῖς ἐργαζόμεθα, τίνα δὲ πάσχομεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης; III.1.5.22–3.

[69] Smith 1978: 298 notes that things disturbing the soul are also against nature.

[70] This has its background already in Aristotle's contention that something is *eph' hēmin* when its origin is in us. *EN* 1110a15–18. Cf. Eliasson 2005: chapter 3.

To sum up: Plotinus combines the Stoic idea of things beyond our control with the Platonic view of emotions as having an irrational side to them. Because emotions are both outside reason's jurisdiction and, as we have seen, either connected to the perceptions of the external world or dependent on it in other ways through the body, it is impossible to make them invulnerable to mistakes or to fully control them. This vulnerability to error and instability is not solely a feature of emotions. Perception, appearance, and thereby all discursive thinking may, to an extent, suffer from the same kind of illness. One by one, Plotinus dismisses things in the normal world as not free or as dependent, and thereby as external to the true self.

This move seems to externalise things that human beings actually think of as parts of their own nature, and most likely it reflects a certain otherworldliness which marks late antiquity in general. This should not, however, avert us from trying to discern its possible philosophical motivation. It is connected to the general question of the higher and lower self, and especially to the question which of these, in fact, is personal. Because of Plotinus' insistence that the higher, rational and intellectual self is most properly the true 'I', in research literature it has sometimes been called the individual self. Yet taking into account the many conclusions reached so far, one could also argue that the embodied self has as much – or more – claim to individuality and personality as the higher self. It is an individual temporal and material expression of the higher self's and soul's more comprehensive and universal nature. Let me here summon Maurice Merleau-Ponty's division between the personal and anonymous body to help.

For Merleau-Ponty, personal acts and habits are based and dependent on anonymous body. By anonymity he refers to an affective and sensuous background behind personal experiences:

> In so far as I have hands, feet and a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent upon my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way which I do not choose. These intentions are general in a double sense: firstly in the sense that they constitute a system in which all possible objects are simultaneously included . . . and furthermore in the sense that they are not simply mine, they originate from other than myself.[71]

The point made is quite interesting: body is not solely our own possession or part, something that we can command at will. Without our initiation, it is directed to and influenced by the world. This intentionality or directedness is anonymous in the sense of conceptually preceding the personal and lying outside our circle of decision, volition and judgement. It can and does acquire different kinds of expressions through personal acts and habits, but

[71] Merleau-Ponty 1945/2002: 511. For one interpretation, Heinämaa 2003: 37–44.

at its foundation there is something pre-personal. Perhaps paradoxically, Merleau-Ponty's anti-Platonist interpretation of the bodily helps in understanding the strangeness of the externalisation of the body, starting from Plato's *Phaedo* and *Timaeus* and arriving at Plotinus. The body is not the self because it is not 'mine' or my 'own' in the same sense that some of our rational thoughts can be. It is inclined towards the world 'anonymously', that is, prior to our giving this inclination any personal expression, much less rational assent. As much as it is ours, it is also a part of the world. Where Plotinus differs is in evaluating this phenomenon. For the phenomenologists this anonymity explains, among other things, our connection and access to the world; for Plotinus it is primarily a hindrance to a better, and more independent, kind of existence.

Positive freedom, or full-fledged autonomy

If emotions, perceptions and appearances are not in our power, what remains up to us and internal to us? Plotinus poses himself the same question:

> So what is left which is 'we'? The very thing that we truly are, to whom nature gave the rule of affections. And similarly in the midst of all these evils received through the body, god gave the 'virtue which has no master'. (II.3.9.14–18; Cf. *Resp*. 617e.)

And a little later:

> One should not think that the soul is such that whatever it undergoes that has an external source, this is its nature, and that of all things it alone has no nature proper to itself. But inasmuch as it has the structure of a principle/origin (*archēs logon echousan*), it, much more than other things, must have many potentialities toward natural activities proper to itself. For it is not possible for that which is a substance not to have, along with its being, desires, actions and the tendency towards the good. (II.3.15.17–24)

The self is identified with that which affects rather than is affected, as that which rules or masters emotions, and itself has no ruler. It is the principle and source of its own actions. Even though being in the body makes us vulnerable to all evils, emotions included, there is a free part in us, that which is capable of virtue, the ruler of emotions.

That this ruler is, unsurprisingly, reason is clear from another context:

> . . . so that also in actions self-determination (*to autexousion*) and 'being up to us' (*to eph' hēmin*) are not referred to acting and to that which is external (*exō*) but to the inner activity (*hē entos energeia*), thought (*noēsis*) and contemplation (*theōria*) of virtue itself. But one must say that this virtue is a kind of intellect and not include in it affections which are enslaved and measured by reason. (VI.8.6.19–24)

As Epictetus says,[72] it is not wealth, status or anything of the like that result in self-mastery, but knowledge of how to live, that is, rational judgements which are up to us. Plotinus maintains that it is solely the pure and passionless reason that is truly up to us and free (*eph' hēmin, hekousios*; III.1.9.11). By using yet more Stoic terminology, he concludes that only its actions are truly 'our own doing' (*to hēmeteron ergon*), and that the passionless reason ought to be the ruler or director (*hēgemōn*) of the soul (III.1.9.9, 11–12).

Both Epictetus and Plotinus think that reason or the capacity to contemplate is free, unlike the emotions which reason can master and will always master, if correctly trained. This capacity or impulse Plotinus considers as our 'own' and 'inner' (*oikeios, endothen*) in contrast to that which comes from or is directed at 'elsewhere', 'outside' (*allothen*; III.1.9.10, 12).[73] The inner activity of thought is, in a special way, unlike any other capacity in us. It is capable of a certain self-sufficiency. It is not dependent on anything outside itself. It is this independence and self-sufficiency that have a pivotal place in Plotinus' thought.

The notions of control and dependency come up again in another context where Plotinus mentions, once again, the example of wife and children:

> Contemplation alone remains not spell-bound (*agoēteutos*) because no one who is self-directed is subject to spell-binding: for he is one, and the object of his contemplation is himself, and his reason is not misled, but he makes what he ought and his own life and work. But there [in the lower realm] there is no self-possession (*ou to autou*), and the reason does not make the impulse, but the irrational also has an origin in what the affection puts forward. For care for children and longing for marriage have evident attraction, as do things that allure men with the pleasure of satisfying their desires. (IV.4.44.1–9)

Plotinus is referring to the higher kind of reason which alone is capable of an unclouded picture of the world. He is considering especially the pure paradigm thought, *noēsis*, which is not vulnerable to any external dependencies, involving only stable and unchanging objects of knowledge. Noetic contemplation is described as not being spell-bound or carried away, that is, being firm, not deluded, and able to resist temptation. This is connected to the distinction between internal and external, made earlier in

[72] Epict. Arr. *Disc.* 4.1.62–4.

[73] This seems to amalgamate Stoicism with Platonism. Epictetus, as we have seen, uses the terminology of 'outside' or 'foreign' of the things beyond our control. In a similar fashion, Marcus Aurelius, as Hadot says, 'insists on the total exteriority of things with respect to us' (Hadot 1998: 106). Plato calls reason the 'inner man' in the *Republic* 589a–b, and earlier in 443c–d he has defined justice as doing things not externally (ἔξω) but with regard to that which is within (ἐντός).

the chapter. Plotinus says explicitly both that everything which is directed to something else is also bound or led by that something, and that all practical life is in this sense spell-bound. Close emotional relationships, carnal desires and actions that follow from them, political activity and desire for power as well as paying too much attention to one's own survival are all enumerated as spell-bound activities, that is, having their origin outside the rational agent.[74]

Reason's proper activities are different, they *spring from itself*, not from the external world, and, ideally, they are also *self-directed*. According to Plotinus, noetic thought is full of actuality of thought directed to objects of true knowledge. It does not happen by inspiration or stimulation by something seen in the external world, but is completely self-originated in its functioning. This activity is, further, an innate activity directed towards oneself, towards the innate truths, and is, therefore, secure, unlike activities in which outside influences can blur the concentration and obscure the 'vision'. The self-originated self-directedness confers on *noēsis self-sufficiency* and *self-possession*. The fact that intellect is self-sufficient in its own proper functioning means that nothing external gets in the way of its perfect activity. It is not dependent on anything beyond its own control.

Finally, Plotinus makes the somewhat sudden remark that this kind of pure agent of thinking is also one. As we have seen, he often emphasises the importance of being one, of being a whole. Unlike the One itself, every other entity below consists of parts. If these parts do not form a harmonious whole, the identity of the thing in question is in danger. We have also learned that the embodied human being is multiple in several different ways. Plotinus' favoured solution to avoid the kind of disunity connected with different behavioural motivations is to identify the self primarily with the core self, the reasoning capacity. Unity is achieved by not permitting the two parts of the composite to become one at all. This is not a separation of one substance, reason, from another, body. Plotinus argues that the principles that make human beings human beings must also become the goals of their activities. Both living functions as well as cognitive capacities belong to these principles, but among them there is a further hierarchy. First, since the body is not the principle of even bodily functions, it has no role as a goal. As functions of the lower soul, bodily functions are among the lower goals of human beings but, echoing Aristotle,

[74] IV.4.43.13–19; 44.9–12; for self-origin VI.8.2.21–2.

a human being should strive to live according to the best part in him.[75] And since the temporal and changing nature of the external world render the discursive thoughts many, changing and outward-directed, they are bound to lack the order and consistency that mark true knowledge. Therefore ultimately only the self-originated and -directed pure contemplation of the forms can render the mind ideally stable and unified. And unity, in turn, equals self-sufficency (*autarkeia*; IV.4.18.21–2).

Plotinus has narrowed down freedom to such an extent that one might wonder if his unrealisable ideal has anything to do with agency as we understand it. I have tried to show that although the picture is undoubtedly inhumane, its motivation is to strive towards unity and autonomy. As so often in ancient philosophy and in Platonism particularly, the discussion is conducted on the paradigmatic and ideal level and remains somewhat detached from everyday concerns and action. Plotinus is aware that the described ideal cannot function as a basis, for example, of determining the scope of responsibility. Whereas for Aristotle voluntary action is that for which human beings are responsible, Plotinus does not restrict responsibility solely to the things that are up to us.[76] Such a restriction would be pointless since only actions that do not happen in the realm of action at all are up to us. In the development described, the human condition as dependent on the world is recognised, and this recognition leads to an understanding of freedom that may be called idealised, but this progress does not lead to a similar narrowing down of the scope of responsibility.

We have seen that reason and especially its perfect paradigm, the intellect, has a capacity for self-mastery and self-sufficiency, alien to any other part or faculty in the human being, and that this capacity is and belongs to the intellect within every human being regardless of whether or not one is conscious of it. However, having this capacity is not enough. The rational soul is that by which we are ourselves (II.3.9.31; *kath' hēn hēmeis*, II.1.5.20–1), but we are not usually aware of the principle, source and core of the rational soul, the fully actual intellection. Just possessing a rational capacity does not make it the whole self, only the most important but unrealised part of the self. It must be actualised in this life. It must be brought into awareness (I.1.11.5–8; I.4.4.12–15). Human beings ought to strive to become conscious of it, to bring reason into a leading role also in the embodied life. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this task. Ultimately there remains

[75] III.9.2.

[76] Arist. *EN* 1109b30–5; Plotinus attempts to make room both for providence and for individual and free actions for which human beings are also responsible themselves (cf. e.g. III.3.5.46–54).

one major responsibility, that of self-improvement of the embodied self, that is, realising aspects of the ideal and autonomous self at the level of ordinary human existence. Becoming godlike is a struggle for the state of a true sage, *spoudaios*, who alone has reached the state of *eph' hēmin*, having things in his control, that is, acting guided by reason alone. Even in most good cases, however, people's actions spring from their reason but remain mixed and hindered by external things and circumstances.[77]

The effort concerns not just our freedom or autonomy but our identity and selfhood. In the treatise on happiness (I.4), Plotinus claims that a good man does not fear anything, and that such a person who still has fears is not just deficient in respect of virtue, but actually only a half-man (I.4.15.16). He believes, further, that a person who fails to actualise or use the rational capacities and is, for example, enslaved by emotions, may question not just whether nothing is in his power, but even whether he himself *is nothing*.[78] Being without control of reason is likened to being half a man or even nothing at all, that is, likened to losing identity and selfhood altogether.

Correctly identifying oneself with the unified inner ruler is of utmost importance for the everyday self's integration and self-constitution. Exercising reason's freedom and mastery in embodied life and action is a step in a normative process of self-constitution. Every act of controlling our emotions, for example, is an act towards self-realisation of that inner, perfect ability. By that exercise one also gradually constitutes and determines one's everyday self. By activating rational capacities the self integrates[79] itself by coming closer to its inner ideal *and* by engaging in a significant authorial work: it is in charge of its own life, it leads and determines its process of self-improvement. As Plotinus said himself, one makes one's own life and work.[80] This process constitutes in a new way that embodied selfhood which in chapter I encompassed all the moments of the individual's life. The self-constitution in question differs from the modern parallels by having a normative *telos*: not just any kind of life, choices and actions count as self-constitution. The normative ideal, the inner self understood as the wholly actualised and integrated reason, is supposed to regulate a process that is not merely an unconnected collection of instants, but a collection

[77] III.1.10.11–15; for *spoudaios*, cf. Schniewind 2003: 89. [78] VI.8.1.24–5.

[79] This is probably the point Plotinus wishes to make at IV.3.8.12–16: all [souls] are all [things], but [they are] each/particular according to that which is active in it (κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἐνεργήσαν ἐν αὐτῇ ἑκάστη), that is, *by one* [*being*] *united with actuality* (τοῦτο δὲ τῷ τὴν μὲν ἑνοῦσθαι ἐνεργείᾳ), but another manifests itself in inquiry (τὴν δὲ ἐν γνώσει), another in longing, and in that [activity] different souls look at different things, and what they look at, they are and become.

[80] IV.4.44.4.

unified by the active and goal-directed self-constitution on the part of the agent. Nor is the rationality in question just any kind of exercise of one's cognitive capacities. It involves understanding the essential structures of the intelligibly ordered cosmos, and as such a heightened understanding of the world.[81]

This is why a person who fears is not, like Plato says, a double man, but a half-man. A failure to wake up from the dream of misguided appearances to a self-realisation of oneself as an active reason and as the ruler of affections makes us lesser beings, because then we do not exercise the power that we most truly are. For Plotinus, self-constitution is not a matter of bringing the different behavioural motivations into harmony thus forming one, integrated agent. In one sense, the self need not be constituted at all since the rational capacities of deliberation and control *are* one's selfhood. Since, however, this selfhood is a paradigmatic and normative ideal and not simply given to everyday consciousness, the selfhood in time must be constituted by gradual self-realisation of this capacity. No one – excluding sages – realises the normative ideal in its fullness, but what can be done is to act in ways which express, part by part, aspects of the true self within. Therefore also every act of controlling emotions and thus actualising one's core self is an act *towards* selfhood.

Plotinus did not, of course, speak in the modern terminology of autonomy, self-determination and self-constitution. Let us end this chapter by giving space to his own metaphor and words. In a famous passage, he urges us to look inside ourselves:

> Retreat to yourself and see; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as a maker of a statue which ought to become beautiful takes away here and polishes there, and makes one place smooth and another pure till he has brought to light the beautiful face [proper] for that statue, so you too must take away what is superfluous and straighten what is crooked and by purifying what is dark to make it bright, and never stop 'building up' your statue till the godlike brightness of virtue shines on you, till you see 'reasonableness standing on its sacred pedestal'. If you have become this, and see it, and are united with yourself in purity, having nothing obstructing you from becoming in this way one, nor having anything else inside mixed with it, but [being] wholly yourself, only true light, not measured by magnitude, or defined by shape into [being something] less, or increased into magnitude by unlimitedness, but everywhere unmeasured because greater than all measure and superior to all quantity; if you see that you have become this, then from this time onwards you have become sight; feel confident about yourself, for

[81] Cf. chapter 5.

having already ascended you no longer need anyone to show you; look intently and see. For this eye alone looks at the great beauty. (I.6.9.7–25; for quotes from Plato: *Phdr*. 252d; 254b)

It is our task to act as *sculptors of our selves*: to cut away all that is excessive, to straighten what is crooked and to illuminate all that is overcast. The subtleties of the analogy are accessible by explicating its reminiscences of Plato. 'Superfluous' refers to the immoderate care of the body in the *Republic*, 'crooked' to the life of bodily pleasures and falsehoods without virtue that leaves its marks on the soul – discussed in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias* – and 'straightening' to the role of reason in sculpting the self.[82] The view inside points to the way Plotinus construes ethical self-improvement as a matter of turning inwards and illuminating, that is, actualising powers that are innate in the soul. The end striven for is a pure intelligible being, a true self and a fully integrated unity. Only this kind of being can properly see the goodness of the One.

Three features of the metaphor are especially worth noticing.

First, human beings build their lives and their temporal selfhood in a similar fashion to the divine architect's mythical construction of the Cosmos.[83] For the embodied person in time gaining a selfhood seems a continual process.

Second, the inner vision creates an inner realm in which the subject both examines and constructs his own nature. To a lesser extent than, for instance, in Augustine's *Confessions*, this realm is conceived as a space in which the rational subject can roam. Rather, there is still a substantial core, a block or statue with given features underneath the excessive materials. And this brings us to the last point:

Third, in contrast to modern accounts of selfhood as a process or a story in time, for Plotinus the end is – or should be – fixed. Only a process leading towards what is good and beautiful counts as true self-constitution. The normative ideal acts also as a regulative principle. Embodied selfhood is always a process towards ideal unity, rationality and virtue, a lifelong exercise in becoming what we are, that is, in identity recognition.[84]

We should, however, be careful in understanding what the word identity means in this context. What is sought is not an individual identity with worldly ties and personal characteristics, but something over and above it,

[82] Cf. *peritta* and *empodios* in *Resp*. 407b–c; *scholia* in *Grg*. 525a; *Phdr*. 253e, perhaps also *Tht*. 173a; and *apeuthunein* in *Ti*. 71c–d. More evidently: *katharos*, *kathairein* in *Phd*. 67c; 69c.

[83] Cf. *tektainein* in I.6.9.13; *Ti*. 28c; 33a–b.

[84] I owe this expression to Gerson 2002: 247, who convincingly shows that this view has a predecessor in Plato's philosophy.

a free self-determination not bound by the restrictions of the phenomena of the material realm.[85] This, rather than the individually limited identity, is our true identity and true self.

[85] Let it just be noted that Michel Foucault was deeply influenced by this picture, and grasped two essential features of the theory. First, that identities formed in the world are always also affected by the world and thus not expressions of inner freedom, and, second, that the process towards true subjectivity consists of stripping away these identities rather than constructing them. Foucault 2001. I have benefited from Alain Petit's visiting lectures on Foucault in the Department of Philosophy, University of Helsinki, April 2004.

CHAPTER 5

Action and other people: the self as a citizen of two communities

In the previous chapters, three general tendencies in Plotinus – or in my interpretation of his philosophy – have become evident. First, the metaphysical hierarchy is explanatory both of the sensible realm in general and more specifically of anthropology as well as human selfhood, psychology and cognition. Plotinus' otherworldliness should therefore not be overstated. Second, Plotinus gives due attention to the nature of temporal and bodily human beings, and considers the sensible realm a necessary starting point for any advancement in both epistemological and therapeutic issues. Third, his radical and (from today's perspective) unappealing emphasis lies, rather, in what he considers as normatively ideal: pure reason, separated from the body and from external influences, directed to itself and its internal objects, the eternal forms. Despite my efforts to show the rationale and motivation behind these views, the third emphasis raises pressing questions about the relation – both real and ideal – a Plotinian philosopher has to the world he lives in as well as the significance of other people in his primarily inward-directed existence. The topic of this chapter is the self in the sphere of action[1] and morality. Its purpose is to explicate what significance action holds in Plotinus' system, what consequences the therapeutic separation from the body and the inward turn have for moral action, and whether, from our point of view, the self-directed and self-absorbed self-improvement endangers other-regard and morality.

[1] Here, action is not used in any special Neoplatonic sense, but simply to refer to the actions in the world, in the realm of other people. Mere contemplative activity does not here qualify as an action.

Plotinus' ethics of disinterested interest[2]

There are two competing views of Neoplatonic, or perhaps more accurately, Plotinus' ethical thinking. According to a widely held view, the overall aim of Neoplatonic philosophers is to escape the mundane every-day life and become like God. They had no interest in politics or in any public role in society, nor can they offer much to guide us in the realm of action or other people.[3] Allegedly, the ethics they propose is a peculiar sort of ethics designed for late-antique philosophers directed to solitary contemplation. Plotinus is described by scholars as proposing an ethical system which has a feel of 'remoteness and unreality', or one that is 'uncompromisingly self-centred and otherworldly'. He simply does not provide 'an ethic that encourages generous caretaking of needy others'.[4] Very recent research proposes a much more positive, perhaps even optimistic view: although there are no treatises on practical ethics in the *Enneads*, if Plotinus' writings on virtue are read against the background of his metaphysical thinking, a coherent ethical theory emerges. Moreover, this theory is not just implicit in the midst of metaphysical considerations: Plotinus considers the theory of virtues important enough to demand it from his opponents and, furthermore, his ethical views get their practical expression in his own exemplary life documented for us by his pupil Porphyry.[5]

This disagreement raises two significant lines of questioning. First, if both strands of thought can be found in the *Enneads*, is there any way of reconciling the two? To what extent can Plotinus' ethical thinking be made coherent? Is its ambiguousness symptomatic, say, of a lack of rigorous ethical thinking, or perhaps of the inherent ambiguousness of Platonic heritage? Answering this cluster of questions will involve situating Plotinus'

[2] From here to the end of the chapter, is an abridged version of my (2006) 'Plotinus' Ethics of Disinterested Interest', *The Journal of History of Philosophy* 44: 1–23. I am grateful for the permission to republish the article in this context. Again, in addition to the people mentioned in the acknowledgements, my thanks are also due to the anonymous referees of the journal and to the participants of two conferences in which earlier versions of this section were presented: the international symposium on ancient philosophy and the public sphere organised by Martha Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola and held in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, June 2001, and the annual meeting of the International Society of Neoplatonic Studies, 2002 (University of Maine, Orono, USA).

[3] For example, in a recent history of Greek literature, Plotinus is said to have mutilated Plato by removing the political side of his philosophy and by making the control of reason an end in and for itself. Saïd and Trédé 1990: 145.

[4] Plass 1982: 253, 255; Dillon 1996; Miles 1999: 124.

[5] Smith, 1999: 227–36; Schniewind 2000: 47–75. (When I was writing this, Schniewind's new book (2003) on Neoplatonic ethics was not yet out from the press.) A similar interpretation is defended by Dominic J. O'Meara in the context of Neoplatonic political thought in his 2003. For the life of Plotinus: Porphyry, *Vita Plotini*.

ethics in the field of ethical theories with respect, particularly, to the place given to other-regard. This task is interesting also with respect to Nicholas White's study on *Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* (2002), which has challenged the view that the ancients presupposed or pursued a harmony of worthwhile human goods. According to what has become the conventional view, the ancient conception of happiness or well-being, *eudaimonia*, can perhaps be considered a peculiar branch of ethical egoism in so far as it includes the idea of primacy of individual well-being, but since the good of the individual is conceived in objective rather than subjective terms, and since the conception of good is further such that virtues and friendship play a large part in it,[6] the modern opposition between one's own good and that of others does not arise. Eudaemonistic ethics may be formally agent-centred, but its content is not. The good one ultimately aims at is not simply one's own pleasure or subjective happiness. As several people have noted, the merit of this ethical understanding is also the possible source of its problems. The theory abolishes the necessity of the conflict between the self and the other, but by doing so it leaves little space for true self-interest. Self-interest becomes a part of ethical behaviour – in one respect, a moralised notion. Challenging the prevalent view, White argues that eudaemonistic ethics resembles modern ethics in recognising the complexity not just of means but of ends of a worthy human life.[7] His book draws our attention to the instances in ancient literature where a happy marriage between self-regarding and other-regarding goods seems hard to come by. This inquiry will revolve around one of these instances: Plotinus' treatment of the virtuous person, the sage, and his conflicting concern for himself and for his surroundings. Are we entitled to expect a strictly monist outlook from Plotinus? And if so, do the *Enneads* provide a coherent theory to that effect?

The second issue of interest concerns the relation between universal and particular, between knowledge and its practical applications. For Plotinus, ethics requires a correct grasp of metaphysics. But if practical ethics is largely based on metaphysical understanding, how does this understanding acquit itself as a tool in everyday life and its changing situations? What makes Plotinus confident in believing that a turn inwards and the specific kind of contemplative life he endorses would result in anything positive in the realm of action? My aim, then, is to give an account of why Plotinus believes that turning inwards is both primary and beneficial to virtue in action.

[6] Cf., e.g. Arist. *EN* 1168a28 ff. [7] For a defence of the more traditional view, Smith, N. 2003.

The line I will be defending proposes that for Plotinus, as for so many philosophers before and after him, virtuous action is an intellectual achievement, albeit intellectual in the ancient and thus, as we shall see, wide sense of the word. I shall argue that the knowledge that reforms the life of the wise man coincides with the knowledge of what is good for all, and that the self-reformation Plotinus endorses is not aimed simply at maximising the happiness of the reformed sage. His version of *eudaimonia* does not necessarily violate our sense of impartiality. Inner tensions mark the choice of the way of life – contemplative or active? – rather than the space between what is good for oneself and what is good for others. What has not been adequately studied is *what* Plotinus can offer to a reader interested in the actual encounters between the person, the world he lives in and other people. Neoplatonic contemplative wisdom may lack the practicality needed in an active life as well as true appreciation of other people as vulnerable agents with hopes and desires of their own, but the *telos* aimed at does contain features desirable for a good moral agent. As we shall see, the inner reformation Plotinus proposes will yield a detached and dispassionate understanding of the whole universe – a view, as it were, from above. This view is accompanied by a realisation that one's happiness lies in functioning as a part of the whole and in contributing to the perfection of the universe.

I will start by confronting Plotinus' version of cardinal virtues that internalises qualities that we would consider to explain normative relations with regard to others. This will lead to a discussion of what kind of perspective upon the world Plotinus deems as ethically ideal, and finally to an assessment concerning where its usefulness might lie.

Internalised virtues

It has lately been argued, to my mind convincingly, that Plotinus' attack on the Gnostics involves a criticism of what he sees as a lack of a true ethical theory and especially one which would have practical implications.[8] He blames his rivals, among other things, for not having a theory of virtue. His own discussion on that topic (I.2) is the key to the controversy on the significance of action in virtue. According to a generally accepted view, Plotinus posits at least two levels or grades of virtue,[9] already encountered in the context of emotion and self-constitution (chapter 4), which have

[8] II.9.15.28–33; cf. Schniewind 2000; 2003: esp. 185–9.

[9] E.g. Gerson 1994: 201–2; Dillon 1983: 92–105. Cf. Dillon 1996; and for Porphyry's even more graded version as well as later influences: Hochschild.

different relations to action. Let me start by recalling the main lines of this influential theory.

The so-called political or civic virtues (*aretai politikai*) are useful in the realm of action. Their role is to give order to desires. They are enumerated as the following four: practical wisdom which has to do with discursive reason, courage which has to do with emotions, reasonableness which consists of a sort of agreement and harmony between passion and reason, and justice which makes each of these parts agree in, as Plotinus says quoting Plato, 'minding their own business where ruling and being ruled are concerned' (e.g. *Resp*. 433a; I.2.1.16–21). What later became known as the cardinal virtues are given a special interpretation. They are connected to control and command within the soul, and despite their name, have little to do with the *polis* or with any social relationships.[10] This is a step towards the inner, and away from the political, as well as from the realm shared with others. It has its basis in the internalisation of justice in the *Republic*,[11] but it goes even further in not discussing the soul in any connection with the city or society. Yet a person with these virtues would still live in the realm of action and very much in and through the body.

Above the political virtues are the greater or contemplative virtues, the so-called purifications. At that stage, as we have seen, the soul is wholly separated and purified from the body, and directed to the intelligible realm and to the contemplation of forms.[12] In an ideal state, virtue does not include an affective element that would be an effective force in action.[13] This is also the point where interpretations start to diverge from one another: The theory leaves open the question whether the pursuit of these higher virtues leaves room for any other-concern and to what extent the sage still acts and interacts with other people.

Many scholars assume that attaining a life according to the higher, contemplative virtues would necessarily entail inactivity in the sphere of other people, thereby leaving behind as unnecessary not just the lower, political virtues, but any virtue in action. Political or civic virtues are a transitory step in the development towards the higher virtues, and the reformed

[10] Some of these virtues may seem unrecognisable in their new form. Simo Knuuttila pressed me on why, for instance, control of emotions would be *courage*.

[11] For a discussion of internalised virtues already in Plato, cf. Emilsson forthcoming b.

[12] I.2.5.4–6; 6.20–8. Cf. Dillon 1983 and chapter 4.2 of this study.

[13] As we have seen in the previous chapter, Plotinus objects most strongly to the non-deliberate element in emotion. This causes problems for him. It may be asked – although this is hardly the right place to tackle this question – what kind of account he can give, for instance, of human motivation, and whether he sees any value in experiences and emotional encounters in the world.

contemplative life of the higher virtues shares little with the virtuous life understood as virtuous action in everyday situations and circumstances.[14] As evidence for this, scholars often refer to Plotinus' contention that a person who attains the life of the higher virtues leaves behind his former life in which virtues have been political, and starts the life of the gods.[15] The question then becomes, What kind of life is the life of the gods?

The notion of 'becoming like God' derives particularly from Plato, but it figures in most ancient philosophical systems as the *telos* of human life.[16] It is generally agreed that in philosophical discussions, the divinity in question is connected to the goodness of the intelligible universe and reason, and resides in the rational soul or intellect. Becoming like God is the process in which the human being cultivates and adheres to this better part of his nature rather than, say, his bodily nature. Where sources and opinions may diverge is whether the God within is personal or the universal and shared Intellect, and to what extent this self-identification is a demand to become another kind of creature than one is, and thus possibly an inhumane ideal.[17] In the course of the chapter, I will give what I think constitutes Plotinus' answer to these questions. What ought not to be controversial is that the ideal of godlikeness is thought to have some repercussions for embodied human beings and their ethical behaviour. The first point to remember is connected to this: for Plotinus, too, virtues belong to the imperfect and changing realm of human existence. Any kind of virtue belongs to the soul, since only what is below the Intellect needs any virtue. The metaphysical levels like the Intellect itself, as well as the One, give virtue its principles and nature, but as paradigms and principles they themselves have no need of virtue.[18] In other words, the whole notion of virtue entails the possibility of not attaining it, of failing or doing wrong. It belongs to the realm in which human beings are embodied and have to struggle with vice and in which everyone is less than perfect. Even higher virtue belongs to the troubled existence of the human-being-in-matter.

[14] Paul Plass, for example, talks of 'radical deprecation of conventional virtue'. Plass 1982: 242; n. 20; cf. Dillon 1996. O'Meara 2003: chapter 4 has proposed a more promising view: the happiness of a true Plotinian sage is unaffected by anything domestic or political. Political virtues themselves are preparatory rather than constitutive, but the sage may communicate divine order through them. R. Sorabji, whose interpretation is based not just on Plotinus but also on Porphyry, points out that an otherworldly goal evidently calls for worldly wisdom. Sorabji 2005: vol. 1, 340.

[15] I.2.7, esp. at 23–7; Gerson 1994: 202; Dillon 1996: 320; Miles 1999: 124; cf. Annas 1999: 68–9.

[16] κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀεὶ εἶναι ἀθάνατος: *Symp.* 207d; ὁμοίωσις θεῷ: *Tht.* 176a5-c3. Cf. Arist. *EN* 1177b33. Sedley 1999 and Annas 1999: chapter 3.

[17] Annas 1999: chapter 3 emphasises a transformation and an accompanying externalisation of the body and our emotional nature.

[18] I.2.3.32–3; I.2.6.12–17.

Second, just like Socrates, Plato and most ancient philosophers, Plotinus connects virtue to a virtuous state of the soul rather than to the nature of actions. What matters is to be a virtuous person, not just the acting out of virtuous living. In the context of emotions, we saw that behind the good actions the soul of a truly virtuous person is free from internal tensions. The goodness of character is considered primary, while virtuous actions are the outward manifestations of this internal state of the soul. Plotinus follows this view quite closely. In inquiring into whether happiness is increased by longer duration, he asserts:

> First of all, it is possible for someone who is not active to be happy, and no less but even more than someone active; then, actions do not yield goodness of themselves, but it is dispositions (*diatheseis*) that make actions excellent. (I.5.10.11–14)

If a person has a virtuous soul, virtuous actions are the visible results of the soul's inner dispositions, not vice versa. In insisting on the primacy of the virtuous state of the soul over virtuous actions, Plotinus is uncompromising to the point of ruthlessness. It is possible for a bad man to save a country, and similarly a good man may forsake someone who is in danger as well as his own life, family or country, if he deems it fitting.[19] The seeming goodness or badness of action tells nothing of the real virtue/vice behind it, namely the psychic condition.

So far, Plotinus is firmly in line with Plato and, in fact, with ancient ethics in general: ethics is not primarily about, for instance, consequences, but about goodness of character. Yet as we have seen in chapter 4.2, he chooses one strand of Plato at the expense of another, propounding purification rather than the conciliatory lower virtues. The radicalism of the position may conceal a reaction to Roman Stoicism and its emphasis on civic duties, but Plotinus' main motivation is to make the self as unified and self-sufficient as possible. However, even though the body has a minimal causal role in the composite, the wise man is still a composite of body and soul.

Interested sage

A Neoplatonic sage is internally harmonious and whole, and in possession of goodness. But would this kind of goodness be anything we would recognise as goodness? After all, his actions may not look particularly virtuous – quite the opposite, in fact. Remember that Plotinus makes a point of saying that a good man may well betray his country in certain circumstances, disagreeing no doubt consciously with the Stoics who would hardly consider

[19] VI.8.6.14–18.

this virtuous behaviour.[20] However, taking into account the above causal direction between the state of the soul and actions, it is *impossible* for the sage to act wrongly. Anyone who has made progress towards the higher, contemplative virtues must also act in ways which are virtuous. It is not possible, says Plotinus, for such a person to act wrongly, and there is no sin in him but only right action. He has always the good, and only the good itself, as his own end and aim, and he is above the particular circumstances of any action.[21] On Plotinus' view, any state of the soul must, by necessity, reflect itself in actions, its outward manifestations. So while the sage would no longer act on the basis of virtues that were built into his soul by 'habituation and practice' (*Phd*. 83b), through acting according to his inner state of the soul, he does demonstrate virtuous behaviour.

The notion of reciprocity of virtues common in ancient ethics is adapted to Plotinus' two-level account. In principle, he agrees that true virtues are such that to have one is to have them all. What is required is a unified understanding of the virtuous life in general, as a whole, and not just piecemeal virtuous behaviour. Moreover, together with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle he argues for the primacy of reason, without which it is impossible to have true virtue.[22] But he cannot subscribe to an idea that higher and lower virtues are mutually entailing. The lower virtues help to achieve higher virtues but they do not entail them, and the higher virtues entail the lower ones only 'potentially'.[23] For the most part, the actions of the sage coincide with the actions of a person who has the lower virtues, but his state of the soul is fundamentally different and more stable. Strictly speaking, then, the sage is virtuous even when he may not seem so. In certain situations, he may even act in ways that seem immoral and offensive to ordinary people, but they do not realise the commitment to – almost the necessity of – goodness behind his decisions, and wrongly judge him on the basis of actions alone.

The wise man, then, does not act badly *if he acts at all*. It is here that Plotinus' theory meets a more serious challenge. According to John Dillon's interpretation, the Plotinian wise man does observe the norms of decent society, but he would take the old lady across the road only in the unlikely event that he noticed her at all, and were she squashed by a passing wagon, he could not care less.[24] This worry is legitimate. A philosopher who has

[20] Again at VI.8.6.14–18, compare with e.g. Cic. *Fin*. 3.32.

[21] I.2.7.11–13; 6.1–2; VI.8.6.14–18.

[22] Cf., e.g. Arist. *EN* 1140a24–8 on *logos* and *phronēsis*.

[23] For Plotinus posing the question of the usefulness of civic or political virtues: I.2.1.21 ff.; for the question of their usefulness after one has achieved the higher virtues: I.2.7.14–31. A man in the possession of higher virtues acts, as we shall see, according to them, but there seems to be some room for him to make use of the lower ones if needed.

[24] Dillon 1996: 324.

attained union with higher levels of reality, perhaps even the momentary mystical union with the One, might not pay any attention to his surroundings. If actions are irrelevant for virtue, a sage might avoid acting and concentrate, rather, on contemplation and his own well-being. This dilemma, and in general the lengthy ponderings over the figure of the sage are not mere intellectual exercise. Even if the figure of the sage was an unattainable ideal, designed to help in articulating the normative grounds for moral deliberation in choices of action, the outlook of the sage is indicative of the direction of the ethical theory as a whole.

Plotinus certainly maintains that the realm of change, sense and matter is the origin of all our problems, and the less we pay attention to its changing features and to the body's needs in it, the better. In this he follows the grim picture of the *Phaedo*. But there is also another Platonic heritage, that of the *Timaeus* and its beautifully constructed universe. In the *Timaeus*, embodied beings are not pitiful creatures deprived of paradise. From the beginning onwards the Maker makes them in connection with and for the universe: to see and understand the universe.[25] According to some scholars, here lies the source of ambiguity in Plotinus. The Platonic inheritance is internally incompatible.[26] However, resorting to this sort of explanation may run the risk of neglecting the complicated reasons behind the position.

In this connection it may be useful to recall a piece of doctrine about action and control, already discussed in chapter 4. It is sometimes suggested that the philosophy of late antiquity with its strong flavour of otherworldliness and turning inwards is the response to more than two centuries of Roman dictatorship and authoritarianism. Lacking the means to influence the decision-making and politics of their own society, the philosophers directed their attention to the improvement of the things which were within their control. Whether or not this historical picture is correct, Plotinus had a theory about things that are under human control. As we saw in the previous chapter, like both Plato in the *Timaeus* and Epictetus in his teachings, he drew a sharp distinction between what is internal to a person and what is external. The first was the realm of free and unimpeded things, the things 'up to us', the second that of necessities and dependencies, things not up to us.[27]

[25] In relation to the *Timaeus*, I am indebted to Sarah Broadie's lectures on 'Nature and Divinity in Plato's and Aristotle's Physics', University of Oxford, February 2003.

[26] For the Platonic background, cf. Smith 1999: 227; Rist 1967: 166; for the possibly problematic double role of the soul as the principle of living and conscious functions, cf. Kalligas 2000.

[27] VI.8.2.33–7; VI.8.6.19–24; cf. e.g. Epict. *Ench*. 1. Cf. also Pl. *Ti*. 47e.

What concerns us here are the implications of this distinction for action. Presumably it can safely be assumed that whilst a person who has internalised the distinction may wish to avoid things not entirely under his control, so many things fall outside his immediate control that his response to the difficulty cannot be just avoidance, but serenity in the face of things that do not happen his way. That is, he may still be active in society and among other people while not letting his mind be affected by things that are not within the scope of his control. The Epictetan sage is not, after all, a hermit. It is just that his relation to his family, for instance, is of a special sort. As is well known, the Stoic theory distinguishes a special class of indifferent things (*ta adiaphora*), i.e. things which are neither good nor bad, but which nonetheless figure in a normal human life. In the daily life and its choices even the sage has to prefer some things over others, but he guards himself from any emotional ties that he cannot control. A similar state of mind lies behind all the activities of the Plotinian sage. Even though the body, for instance, ought to be given as minimal attention as possible, the composite of the soul and body is not left to perish.[28] The 'up to us' comes from the internal freedom and virtue, and for Plotinus, it is in differing degrees present also in actions directed outward.[29] This is what makes us responsible agents and not just mindless parts of a predestined *kosmos*.

Plotinus' stance toward the question whether we should strive to leave the realm of necessities altogether is displayed in his accurate reading of Plato. When Plato says that 'man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven' (*Tht.* 176a8–b1), on Plotinus' view he does not mean that we should flee from the life on earth altogether. 'An escape', he interprets, 'is not going away from earth but being on earth "just and pure with understanding" (*phronēsis*)' – i.e. living on earth justly and with the help of practical wisdom (*Tht.* 176b2–3; I.8.6.10–12). Similarly, his criticism of the otherworldliness of Gnosticism targets explicitly the lack of treatises and

[28] After all, as Plotinus says, the body is the instrument and the beautiful house of the soul in the sensible realm, and the soul is tied to it for a reason, because it is necessary for it to live a period of embodiment (I.4.16.21–30).

[29] VI.8.6.26–32; cf. III.1.5.17. According to John Bussanich, a person who believes that he *chooses* to act virtuously is actually under enchantment (Bussanich 1990: 183). In my more deflationist reading of the same text (IV.4.44.16–30), a person who believes that chosen actions are truly free if they are motivated, for instance, by as long a life as possible for ourselves and our companions, commits two errors: of thinking that (1) long life is good in itself and in all circumstances, and, (2) that he has entirely freely come to this conclusion. In fact, he is compelled to think so by selfish desires. This is the 'enchantment' he is under. Bussanich claims, further, that the consciousness of the sage is not directed to particulars. In my interpretation, he must still have *phantasiai* also of the sensible realm. The passages cited (I.4.10.22–34; IV.4.8.4 ff.) are about the normal functioning of consciousness and its disposition or capacity to disregard material that is irrelevant.

theories which deal with conduct in the world.[30] Despite the expressed aspirations to a pure intellectual state like that of a god and the insistence on reason and pure intellect being the most valuable part of us, Plotinus is acutely aware of the human condition.

When Plotinus demands that the philosopher rise above actions and choices, he is not renouncing all action in the world but criticising the Stoics for *remaining* on this level of virtue. While the Stoics fare better than the Epicureans in acknowledging a higher good than the pleasant, Plotinus believes that they mistakenly regard virtuous choices and actions in the world as constitutive of the good, and fail to see the higher, transcendental intelligible realm that governs the sensible universe, and that is the proper source of virtue.[31] Nevertheless, the 'becoming like god' happens in a bodily existence and in the world. That is why it was earlier stated that the wise man is full of good action (*kathorthōsis*; I.2.6.1–2). He does not need the lower virtues as guides for practical action because he *acts* according to the higher principles (I.2.7.20–4). He knows when to act and when not to act, and all the actions flowing from his internal state of virtue are virtuous.

Wisdom, virtue and happiness all depend on the correct kind of relation to and vision of the intelligible, and this vision makes us similar to the things we see. It makes us like gods and it reforms our lives according to it.[32] Virtue is both the means by which the godlike life can be attained and a part of what it is like to be a god: 'but God, if you talk about him without the virtue, is only a name' (II.9.15.40). That this self-reformation does not necessarily entail self-centred withdrawal from the world is also suggested in the following passage from the treatise on *eudaimonia*. After advocating a life without emotions, Plotinus hastens to add:

> A man of this sort [i.e. a wise man] will not be unfriendly or inconsiderate because of these things; he will be like this to himself and in dealing with his own affairs: thus he will render to his friends all that he renders to himself, and so will be the best of friends while remaining with the intellect. (I.4.15.22–5)

There is something in the wise man which makes him good to the people around him even though his directedness is simultaneously towards inner wisdom, and even though he is not drawn to it by emotions. In so far as he treats his friends as he treats himself, his ethical deliberation cannot be

[30] II.9.15.23 ff.

[31] V.9.1, esp. line 15. Cf. Wildberg 2002: *passim*. Wildberg's emphasis is on the religious and mystical experience rather than intellectual progress, perhaps because his subject is the Neoplatonic ethics in general and thus also the post-Plotinian developments. In articulating the relations between metaphysics and ethics his article is very rewarding.

[32] I.4.16.10–14.

purely agent-centred. In fact, the wise man would have a calling to live and work among other people, for Plotinus maintains that after union with the One, the soul *must* 'come and tell, if it could, also to another that union "there" [i.e., in the higher or better realm]' (VI.9.7.20–8). A philosopher who has gone through Plotinian self-reformation will go back to the cave to teach others what he has seen. The wise man has a duty to help others to achieve the same wisdom and virtue he himself has attained. Since there is no suggestion that this undertaking could be constitutive of happiness, the actions of the sage cannot be based on purely self-referential considerations of happiness.

As already mentioned, these demands and the portrait of the virtuous sage are supported by Neoplatonic metaphysics. For Porphyry, Plotinus is an exemplary person – an embodied god.[33] Andrew Smith has drawn attention to the way Porphyry describes his teacher as being 'present at once to himself and to others' (*VP* 8.19–20).[34] The verb *suneimi* belongs to technical terminology of the Neoplatonists. It derives its meaning in the connection between the two acts of essences, the one that is identical with the essence and the act that proceeds from the essence. The proceeding act is dependent on the act of the essence but not the other way around.[35] The Intellect, for instance, is a dependent product of the One. But the act of production is also 'together with itself', in self-identity, and thereby something other than the One, although dependent on it. It supports itself by being actively that which it is, noetic thought.[36] Being present to itself is this act of self-identity.[37] In a slightly different meaning *suneimi* is used to convey the One's presence to everyone. Souls may be ignorant of their source and of the presence of the One in them, but the One is nonetheless present to them at all times.[38]

Porphyry's choice of wording suggests a genuinely Neoplatonic possibility to accommodate the conflicting tasks of the wise man. The doctrine of emanation (or, rather, procession, *proodos*) relies on two principles relevant here, the principle of undiminished giving and the principle of omnipresence. The former establishes that in addition to its internal activity, the One has a ceaseless and overflowing productive power which gives rise to everything else. This activity displays the goodness of the One and is repeated by each and every thing below the One. The latter refers to the omnipresence of the One. As the ultimate universal cause of all things, the One is present to everything, not merely to its direct descendant in the procession. The

[33] E.g., *VP* 10. [34] Smith 1999: 229. [35] For the term, cf. Schroeder 1987.
[36] V.4.2.26–36; VI.7.41.17 ff. [37] Cf. e.g. Emilsson 1999. [38] VI.9.7.29.

power or density of its presence depends on how far from it in the hierarchy the thing in question is.[39] Together these principles would seem to suggest that the goodness of the One is present in everything, and, furthermore, that goodness is always generous. It belongs to its nature that there is no shortage but an abundance of it. Through contemplation, the sage secures that not only does he, as a human being, exhibit the goodness of the One and of the intelligible order, but – and more importantly – that his state of mind resembles the Intellect or the One itself.

According to Porphyry, then, Plotinus was capable of two simultaneous but different full actualities, one that was internal to him and the other directed outside of him. He was capable of being present both to himself as well as to others, of remaining within the Intellect and being the best of friends. The double structure is recapitulated in Plotinus' distinction between two kinds of care (*epimeleia*) of everything: an authority ordering things without active participation, and a more involved care which 'infects the doer with the nature of what is being done' (IV.8.2.25 ff.). Like the One, the sage's care is of the former kind. His presence and goodness flows towards and affects everything around him without having any consequences on his internal state of mind. And just as it is impossible to think of any flow from the One if it did not have an internal activity, if it was in itself nothing, it is impossible to think of a truly good action without an internal goodness. This is why only actions that stem from the internal source of the good can be truly virtuous.

But how far can the similarity between human beings and metaphysical and perfect entities be stretched? It must be noted that Plotinus qualified his earlier statement about the teaching duties of the wise man by saying that a wise man would tell others of his discoveries 'if he could'. Our philosopher goes on to maintain that some of the philosophers who have attained the union with the One will deem political and civic issues not of value for them. This is likely to happen to some of those who 'have seen much'.[40] The statement does not sit well with the idea of the sage as generously good. Considering the nature of the theory, the sage cannot be expected to abide by civic duties and customs, but we can insist on the self-diffusiveness of his goodness. At this point, however, Plotinus seems to leave open the possibility that for some sages, the more they see the One, the less generous – or ungenerous, if I may say so – they become.

The dilemma has a predecessor in the much-discussed conflict of the rulers of the *Republic*. Ruling is described as the duty of the rulers who

[39] V.4.1–2; V.5.8.24; VI.8.16.1. For the metaphysics of the One, cf. Bussanich 1996. [40] VI.9.7.26–8.

might actually get more pleasure out of philosophising. Plotinus' inspiration comes from the 7th book where those who have seen the light are required to go back to the darkness of the cave. As Nicholas White argues, Plato is sensitive to the conflict between rulers' own happiness and that of the city as a whole, but he does not treat this conflict as fatal. In pursuing what is good to the city, the philosopher-ruler pursues what is more truly good than his own happiness.[41] Somehow the juxtaposition is not between the good of oneself and that of others, but, rather, between good that is partial and particular and one that is wider and universal – and therefore more truly good. This will become clearer in the case of Plotinus' sage torn between contemplation and the other-regarding actions. Here it suffices to conclude that there are sages who use their converse with the One to derive the principles for good action. Like Minos of the pseudo-Platonic dialogue, they legislate according to their converse with the higher being, or, as Plotinus puts it, 'by the divine touch' (VI.9.7.23–6; ps.-Pl. *Minos* 318e–320b). A socially disinterested philosopher interested in the well-being of others may be an inherently problematic figure, but Plotinus' discussion of such a figure is by no means straightforwardly pessimistic.

From habituation to dialectic and contemplation

The above account of the primacy of contemplative virtues and the virtuous state of the soul over any virtuousness manifested in action raises the pressing question of *what* would make the wise man have anything useful to contribute to a socially active life or politics. If the sage is a moral role model for those around him,[42] on what is his own virtuous behaviour grounded? If, as I claim, he would not forsake people simply because he is too busy contemplating and saving himself, he ought to have some means of deliberating about what is good on a more general level, taking the specific circumstances of the particular situation into account. Given how little space and value Plotinus grants to emotions like compassion or pity, he must provide an account of what ensures that reason and self-reflection alone guide us towards good and impartial action rather than selfishness.

It might still be insisted that following the line defended in the *Republic*, Plotinus can always rely on habituation as a source of virtue.[43] In the *Republic*, good actions contribute to the formation of an internally good soul. Similarly for Plotinus, good actions could play a part in the soul's striving for the realisation of its inner self and source. I by no means wish to deny

[41] White 2002: 198–208. [42] Schniewind 2000: 55. [43] Cf. e.g., O'Meara 2003: 59–60.

the worth of habituation in the soul's gradual development towards virtue, but I do want to stress its limitations. For Plato the external world can, at least according to some interpretations, affect the soul by contributing to the balance between the three behavioural motivations, whereas Plotinus, as we have seen, mistrusts any such balance and emphasises the exclusive rule of reason, our inner self. A good man is not a composite of soul and body because being good and having true well-being only properly concern the rational soul. True virtue is always connected to the free and unimpeded acts of the intellect internal to the soul, and the beneficial impact it has on discursive and practical reasoning. There are no external measures that can effect it, bring it about or create it. The best the external measures can do is to promote the inwardly directed revelation of them. The right kind of experiences in the world facilitate openness to one's inner wisdom, but the impact is restricted to this negative effect.[44] Throughout, Plotinus emphasises the intellectual aspect of virtue, and understanding the higher principles on which one acts. For instance, even in such activities as rhetoric, generalship, administration and kingship, know-how must derive its excellence from the true knowledge of the intelligibles.[45] It is not a result, as we might expect, of experience, but relies on knowledge. For these reasons I maintain that the solution to the dilemma of what makes the wise man practically wise is, in the end, to be found by explicating intellectual development rather than habituation. We must next say something of the nature of intellection in relation to action.

The penultimate goal of human life, according to Plotinus, is to become a perfect knower, in full recollection of all Platonic forms. Intellectual life as the true and proper goal of human beings is, in fact, given much more space in the *Enneads* than the final union with the One. In noetic contemplation, we are united not just with the Intellect, but with its contents, the forms (V.9.8.11–16; V.9.9; cf. also e.g. V.3.10–11). *Noēsis* is perfect eternal intellectual activity, a full and instantaneous understanding of all essences. As we saw in chapter 3, through coinciding with the knowledge of essences, becoming a perfect knower would also yield complete knowledge of the essential features of the universe. Starting from discursive and fallible philosophising dialectic leads to the discernment of things that truly exist, that is, essences and the salient kinds of beings: forms and the primary kinds. This is called settling down in the Intellect (I.3.4.9–16). The Aristotelian influence is evident here. The self-contained activity of the *nous* concerns unchanging and eternal objects (e.g. Arist. *EN* 1139a6–8; 1177b1–5;

[44] I.1.10.13–14; I.4.14. [45] V.9.11.21–5.

De an. 429b10–17), among which Plotinus chooses essences as more relevant than fixed stars or mathematical objects. Furthermore, without hesitation he links essences with Platonic forms and their contemplation with recollection.

Ethics, in turn, is described as a combination of dialectic and virtuous dispositions and exercises. It has a practical side to it and there is need for application skills, but its principles and foundation lie in dialectic and wisdom (*sophia*).[46] Both wisdom and practical reasoning (*phronēsis*) rely on soul's association with the Intellect and its content, the forms. Although Plotinus borrows yet another Aristotelian notion, practical reasoning, he emphasises its total dependence on what is universal and immaterial. If the treatises are to be trusted, acquiring beneficial dispositions seems to be confined almost solely to separation from the body and exercises towards self-control in relation to desires and emotions, that is, to the kind of self-constitution or -realisation examined in chapter 4. The recurring calls for concentration on the well-being of one's own soul exhibit not the sole aim of a good human being but the order of primacy in striving towards wisdom. Good, practical action is based on a healthy and harmonious soul through which the knowledge provided by dialectic can guide action.

The philosopher so disposed may not have acquaintance with what we call social or political sciences, but he would know essences, and for instance by knowing a species-form he would also have access to the salient constitutive parts of that species, that is, its crucial attributes. He has more valuable possessions than the politician's expertise: an understanding of essences and the real nature of things. His decisions to act and to react, no matter how inappropriate they might seem, are based on knowledge of higher principles. For example, the serenity – almost indifference – the Plotinian sage shows when facing the death of a friend is due to his knowledge of what death truly is. If his dying friend is a wise man, he too will have a similarly detached view of his own death because he knows its true nature.[47]

As the discussion in chapter 3.1 showed, dialectic reveals not just essences, but also their interrelations, and actually the whole intelligible structure of the universe. By distinguishing the forms, the essential nature of each thing, and by 'weaving' them together, that is, realising their connections, the dialectician goes through the whole intelligible world.[48] Through this

[46] I.2.6.13–15; I.3.6, esp. lines 12–14.

[47] I.4.4.32–7. Although Plotinus disagrees with Epicurus over most issues, as well as over what happens in death, both think that understanding the true nature of things has therapeutic consequences, e.g. in relation to the fear of death. For another background to the passage, cf. *Resp*. 387d.

[48] I.3.4.13–16.

activity he exposes the intelligible order that governs and creates the world-order of the sensible realm. The importance of order, and of being a part of the whole world-order, is displayed by Plotinus in several contexts, one of which is his discussion of providence (III.2). When considering the particular cases in which something in the sensible realm might not seem good or well-created, Plotinus argues, one ought to remember always to consider the parts in relation to the whole. One should always determine whether the part is harmonious and in accord with the whole, just as one considers the hand in the context of the man it belongs to. The parts of the universe may be either 'friendly' or 'hostile' to one another, but they are all in harmony with it.[49] The universe has a certain order in which everything has its own place, and harmony is a feature of the whole of that order. Importantly, this order is not a mere structure of substances and their interrelations. It also reveals a hierarchy of values, based on each thing's participation in the higher principles.

Human beings, Plotinus believes, have a special place in the world-order. Unlike any other living beings, they are both intelligible universes (*kosmos noētos*) and parts of the All.[50] Following the suggestion in the *Timaeus* (90b–c), Plotinus believes that it is possible for a self to devote itself either to its appetitive or to its intellectual nature. The self can realise itself as a part of the whole, tied to the necessities of the universe and to its own restricted place in it. This is a realisation of oneself in particular surroundings and circumstances, and with motivations and aims connected to the particular place in the universe in which one finds oneself. It is a natural situation of a soul *as an embodied soul*, in particular place, time and circumstances.[51] However, through dialectic the self can approach knowledge, and thereby self-realisation as its better part, the paradigmatic Intellect. As such, it is independent from worldly concerns and in full command of everything there is to know. Through the identification with its better part, the self brings to fruition the existing and basic kinship between the rational soul and the intelligible cosmos,[52] which guarantees a complete, unified and coherent intellectual grasp. This gives rise to a kind of view from above

[49] III.2.2.4–8; 23 ff.; III.2.3.7 ff.

[50] II.2.2.4–5; III.3.5. Runia 1999 argues that the term refers to the *Timaeus* with its interest in physics, order and the rationality of the cosmos.

[51] III.4.6.8–10.

[52] Two things are relevant here although there is no space to discuss them at any length: first, the originally Aristotelian doctrine according to which in contemplation, the thinker becomes identical with its objects of thought (e.g. Plot. V.4.2.46–51; V.9.5); and second, the isomorphism and connection of the rational soul and the cosmic soul. For the latter in the *Timaeus*, cf. Sedley 1999: 316–21; Betegh 2003.

onto the whole universe. To go back to the example used earlier, things that may seem bad to an ordinary man, like instances of suffering, have significance in the whole. Since this significance is discernible to the wise man, he will not feel distressed. He understands that while human beings are valuable, they occupy the middle place between gods and animals. That is their place in the universe, and within that place there is a further order as well as a system of retribution that needs to be taken into account.[53] From the viewpoint of the whole, detachment is often the appropriate response, regardless of how it may look from a particular point of view.

Perspectival and non-perspectival goodness

It should by now be relatively easy to see how contemplation contributes to the peace of mind of the sage. We have, however, also been told that Plotinus' sage is not merely a detached observer, but a considerate person and a good friend *who renders to others what he renders to himself*. The wording is familiar. Aristotle, for instance, talks of a friend as another self, and according to Cicero, some Stoics held that the wise man will hold his friends' interests as dear as his own.[54] Does the sage sometimes act for the sake of others and, hence, not merely out of concern for his own peace of mind? And if he does, how exactly will a detached providential view of the universe connect with selfless behaviour and with concern for others? This brings us to the question of the relation between ethics and cosmology, discussed often in the context of Stoicism. A short digression to this debate will reveal the exact nature of Plotinus' contribution.

According to a recent interpretation by Rachel Barney,[55] it is difficult to accommodate selfless behaviour within the Stoic theory of deliberating over indifferents and courses of action. What the Stoics need is a calculus of value to weigh the indifferents which figure in particular situations, and if this calculus relies on agent-centred selection, just and selfless action becomes problematic to explain. The solution favoured by many scholars proposes that the Stoic position is agent-neutral, and that virtuous action relies on impartial deliberation. The difficulty Barney finds with this reading is that there is not much textual evidence to suggest that the Stoics would have been motivated by impartiality, or by the idea that as a rational agent, one person is not different from anyone else. There is, however, another strand of Stoicism that many deem to be helpful here. Even if the treatises that

[53] What kind of fate is just or unjust depends also on the virtuousness of one's previous lives. III.2.7–8. Cf. Rist 1967: 160–1.

[54] Arist. *EN* 1156b10; *Magna Moralia* 1213a20–4; Cic. *De fin*. 3.21.70.

[55] Barney 2003.

deal with deliberation over indifferents remained silent on impartiality, the cosmopolitical ideal suggests that fundamental moral obligations could be grounded on the understanding of each and every human being as essentially similar, despite the contingencies that mark his personal situation.[56] This ideal is based on an understanding of Stoicism that connects ethics with cosmology: ethics is about conforming to the cosmic nature of which our nature is a part, and in this respect Stoicism is in line with the cosmological turn of the *Timaeus*.[57] The dialogue between the proponents and critics of the cosmological reading is going strong, and it may be true that the evidence for such an ideal in Stoicism is mostly late and occasionally ambiguous.[58] In particular, it is sometimes hard to see to what extent the cosmological considerations and the view of humanity as essentially the same everywhere are supposed to affect real behaviour towards other people.

Plotinus is clearly influenced by the cosmological and cosmopolitical considerations of his predecessors, but his novelty lies in the articulation of the connection between cosmological understanding and moral choices. First, as we have seen, throughout his discussion of dialectic and its principle, the *Nous*, Plotinus has helped himself to the Aristotelian notions of species and genera. This yields a more precise picture of what it is that the wise man actually knows. Cosmological knowledge consists of an intellectual vision, but this vision is not directed primarily towards the celestial revolutions of the *Timaeus* (90c–d). It is a full grasp of the intelligible species and genera that are represented in the sensible universe. Knowledge of the form of human being reveals the essential attributes of humanity, as well as its place in the overall system of species and genera. The person in possession of such a knowledge is capable not only of identifying a human rightly but also of understanding the kind of activities and goals proper to human beings.[59] Furthermore, his realisation shows the species in relation to other species and genera, and never in isolation. Second, the link between universe and moral deliberation is direct and explicit: Plotinus demands that

[56] Plut. *De Alex. fort.* 329a–b; Marcus Aurelius 2.1; 6.44; 67; Sen. *Epist.* 41; for the unimportance of individual beings, Cic. *De fin.* 3.21. For the agent-neutral reading cf., e.g. Nussbaum 2002: 31–49; White 2002: 311–26. It has also been pointed out by Pierre Hadot (1995: 238–50) that exercises of detaching oneself from the body, from emotions as well as from individuality were known in all philosophical schools, especially in Platonism, Stoicism and Epicureanism.

[57] E.g. Plut. *Mor.* (*De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*) 1069E. Cf. Betegh 2003.

[58] Against the cosmological reading and over-emphasis on metaphysics, cf. Annas 1999: chapter 5, as well as her 1993: 159–79.

[59] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty has proposed a slightly similar solution to the problem of the relation of contemplation and practical reasoning in Aristotle. According to her, the solution is not explicit in Aristotle but its spirit is Aristotelian. Rorty 1978.

a right choice (*proairesis*)[60] must be directed towards the same end towards which the whole universe is directed. That kind of choice does not merely concern the fulfilling of its own lack or need. He warns against looking for what is agreeable to an individual rather than for the whole universe.[61]

The ethical theory that emerges from the passages is not purely agent-centred. It is based on a global standpoint and directed to the perfection of the entire *kosmos*, not on the happiness of any one part of it. While social virtues are not constitutive of the good, the cosmological point of view renders the well-being of the world as a whole the *telos* of an individual's life. In the same vein, Plotinus ridicules the Gnostics, who thought that a limited group of people were chosen by God as something special. They show both arrogance as well as ignorance about the entire intelligible order of the universe. No one is alone at God's side, and every ascent depends upon the nature of one's soul, not just upon the goals one sets for oneself. Moral progress turns out to be a process towards the recognition of the limitedness of agent-centred deliberations, and the simultaneous gradual unfolding of the agent-neutral stance.[62]

Although Plotinus is not motivated by the idea of equality of worth, and even accepts that some may be born in this life to be slaves, he does provide the kernel for a development to a more modern approach. This lies in the idea of the essential sameness of human souls. Knowing the world-order includes the idea that beauty of the soul, its moral order, is the same regardless of which beautiful soul we look at. In all of them, if it is found at all, it is a reflection of paradigmatic virtue and goodness. For this reason, an excellent man is graciously disposed to everyone.[63] The person who philosophises and makes progress in virtue is closer to his true being, pure virtuous reason, than the one in whom irrational parts rule the whole soul, and admittedly it is possible that souls may be endowed with unequal capacities of attaining wisdom even before or without the body.[64] Nevertheless, each human being has an immortal, intellectual soul – it is just that some of us are more conscious of it than others. Accordingly, Plotinus claims elsewhere that to show friendliness to someone or something is to show it to all things of the same kind (II.9.16.7 ff.).[65] A charitable reader is free to infer that what one admires in one human being is a potentiality of each and every human being with a specifically human rational soul.

[60] Cf. above, p. 183, n. 16. [61] IV.4.35.33 ff.; II.9.9.74–6.
[62] II.9.9. For a similar modern view, cf., e.g. Hampshire 1959 (a proponent of reflexive detachment).
[63] I.6.5.9–17; II.9.9.45–6.
[64] II.9.9.1 ff. This is a peculiar claim which does not seem to go well with what Plotinus says elsewhere.
[65] The chapter is not about human beings, but the principle seems generalisable.

The good of the universe is more important than the good of any one of its parts, be that myself or the beggar on the corner of a London tube station. This leaves open two courses of action in relation to the beggar. On the one hand – and this is warranted by textual evidence but certainly less appealing for a modern interpreter – it is consistent to claim that the beggar has his place in the overall order of the universe and even though we may pity him, going to great lengths to improve his situation would be considered meddling with destiny which governs retribution in the succession of incarnations.[66] The justice that regulates the distribution of good is of the harsh providential kind. On the other hand, as a rational human being and a part of the universe with its own worth, the beggar cannot be reduced to the status of instrument of other people's happiness. It could be argued that it cannot be right from the point of view of the universe that some people are treated as something less than human beings, especially if this happens in order to make life easier or more pleasurable for others. Furthermore, a reader with no commitments to reincarnation and eternal retribution can freely conclude that the universe would be more harmonious if none of its parts were forced to undergo such unnecessary hardships. Be that as it may, understanding the order and good of the whole universe enables people to detach themselves from surplus arrogance, as well as from pettiness and partiality. Plotinus' wise man is not deluded into thinking that his own station is in some way singularly important. This would be a misunderstanding of the form of man, and of one's own relation both to that form and to the whole intelligible harmony, and thereby in itself a step away from wisdom, not towards it.[67]

Even though a certain detached or universal point of view has widely been accepted as useful or even necessary for moral decision-making, it has, famously, serious shortcomings. It relies on the assumption that the agent *could* make himself independent from the character and life he is and lives, as well as on the assumption that such an outside view would be ethically beneficial.[68] In relation to the first worry, Plotinus is certainly aware that gaining a detached view is difficult and may fully succeed only for moments, although he may not recognise that it might be problematic to build one's ethical theory on a chance which is so remote. As to the second horn of the problem, Plotinus does not claim that a view from above would be sufficient for life and action in the moral sphere. Remember that human beings are not just 'private universes' but parts of the All. The vision of

[66] Cf., e.g. III.2.13. [67] II.9.9.28–31.
[68] For this argument in another context, see Williams 1985: 111.

the whole universal order yields not only an understanding of the kinds of things there are in the universe – such as humanity – and of their relation to the intelligible realms, but also the particular role of every rational soul within the whole. In embodied life, every one of us has a certain place in the universal order. Individual souls contribute to the creation of the complete sensible realm.[69] Their coming into being and acting in a certain slot in the universe, and in a particular body, affects the way the whole universe turns out to be. The men who are dear to God, Plotinus believes, know their own place, both in the universe as well as in the intelligible realm, and they accept the unavoidable necessities that befall them. They take care of the particular place and role that belong to them in the order of the whole.[70] The double perspective helps them to face at least some of the contingent conditions and changing circumstances of everyday life.

My main concern in this chapter has been to show how the intellectual efforts and complex metaphysical thinking of Neoplatonic philosophers lead to genuine ethical theory, and one that we can find understandable, to some extent familiar, and aspects of it perhaps even appealing. Undeniably, this approach runs the risk of overintellectualising Plotinus. The source of beauty and goodness is the ultimate *archē* of the Plotinian metaphysical hierarchy, the One, and while its goodness is present in the intelligible order and through that in the well-structured universe, it is hardly exhausted by a rationalised description of the hierarchical order of interconnected forms and the intelligible species and genera. Something essential to goodness has very likely been left out. One way to approach goodness is to emphasise its varied manifestations. Even though particular human beings, for instance, display deficiencies when compared with the intelligible paradigm 'human', they also make it possible for beauty and goodness to be manifested in as many forms as possible, and therefore each of them can be considered of unique worth.[71] There is a further, connected, question if and how the experience of the union with the One, with an infinite and yet absolutely single principle beyond being, adds a further layer to the sage's moral outlook. An experience of unity with pure goodness must have effects

[69] VI.7.7.9–17.

[70] II.9.9.72; cf. Epict. *Ench*. 53. Bussanich 1990: 164–6, operates with a slightly similar division into individual point of view and what he calls a 'view from nowhere'. In his reading the latter is not primarily an intellectual vision of the rational order of the universe, but, rather, a realisation of the unreality of human lives, their nature as roles in the cosmic play. In his view the two points of view are in irreconcilable tension, not the useful double strategy I have tried to put forward. In the context of Plato and the *Republic*, Waterlow 1972/3:31 talks of an attempt to see things from the point of view of as many different cases as possible.

[71] E.g. IV.3.8.16.

beneficial to the soul experiencing it, and through the soul to action. Perhaps the experience of the common source and original unity of all souls and intellects has moral consequences.[72] At the very least, the identification with the One and the accompanying momentary loss of the self present a final blow to any mistaken belief that the 'I' is singularly important. Since the One and any experience of it are beyond the reach of language and propositional descriptions, the impact of this is difficult to determine and impossible to treat exhaustively. In any case, it would merit a discussion of its own.[73]

Let us now pull together some of the threads I have been developing. Plotinus' ethics combines Plato's insistence on what is good *simpliciter* with Stoic cosmopoliteanism, and from these arises his own universalism that relies on intellectual vision of the intelligible order of the universe. The order is further explicated in the Aristotelian vocabulary of species and genera. This vision yields the sage as agent-neutral. He does not seek only the good of himself but he understands the larger scheme of things. He is capable of an objective or global point of view, and sees, for instance, the essential worth of every human soul. Considered from the point of view of action, he sees and is motivated by at least some of the particularities in his position, as well as by those near to him – which is necessary in order to determine the right kind of action – but he does not base his action on the limited point of view of himself. This gives the sage a double advantage: on the one hand he is in command of the essences and thereby capable of understanding the essential characteristics and structures of the universe. His view will not be clouded by accidental differences, merely seemingly important distinctions, or by purely agent-centred considerations. On the other hand his vision of the whole universe and of each thing's proper place in the universe informs him of many of the details necessary in decision-making concerning token situations and his particular place in the world. Understanding each part's role and function in the context of the whole would increase, not decrease, in intellectual ascent.

The Plotinian virtuous person is a citizen of the two communities that Seneca distinguishes, the universal one and the one assigned to him by birth (Sen. *Dial.* 8.4.1.), and this realisation will illuminate his stance towards others and his choices of action. Applied to himself, the sage would look at himself, too, from these two different points of view. The detached

[72] For a fuller discussion of this interesting idea, cf. Bussanich 1990: 178.
[73] In the last chapter, I will say something more about the nature of this experience.

knowledge would enable him to see correctly his own essential character as well as his proper place among other people. Perhaps ironically, then, the self-knowledge attainable by turning inwards to contemplation could guarantee that one would realise correctly one's own place in the universe. It could safeguard the self from egocentric self-deception rather than lead to it.[74]

We are now better equipped to understand also some sages' unwillingness to go back to the cave as well as their harshness in the face of, e.g. war casualties. First, in order to retain the disinterested cosmological point of view, the sage must not allow for interpersonal and other contingent ties to have any real pull on his agency. Second, it is entirely possible that the place occupied by some sages does not involve teaching or social activity. Some sages may be so disposed that they serve the universe best by contemplation, and for some reason or another their surroundings may not even need their involvement. By contemplating they would not serve merely their own particular good but the same overall good or good *simpliciter* as the more socially active philosophers. Similarly, in situations where help is beyond the capacities of the philosopher, he would contend that universal justice is at work and that in the end it will even out what seems a gross injustice. For a wise man, the self-referential good and what is good *simpliciter* coincide and proper actions flow effortlessly from inner wisdom.

A true conflict between self's interests and selfless behaviour exists only at the level *below* wisdom. The sage has the advantage of the agent-neutral stance, but ordinary people still deliberate mostly from an agent-centred point of view. They serve themselves best by concentrating on advancing the well-being and virtue of their own souls, but in order to be virtuous, they also need to pay attention to the well-being of others. However, the life of a Florence Nightingale, if inappropriate to the life and times in question, could endanger the work of providence, and, moreover, it would hardly leave enough room for the necessary intellectual efforts of the individual. Yet a complete disregard of the needs of others would be symptomatic of a total ignorance and negligence of the complex world-order and one's place in it. The laborious task of finding a balance between these conflicting aims is the human condition. Yet even here the conflict is not as serious as one might think. To the extent that good actions play a role in the perfection of the universe as well as promoting the well-being of the agent, there seems to be one sole aim, simultaneously global and self-referential. It is just that we have a hard time recognising that.

[74] II.9.9.

As we have seen, Plotinus recognises the possibility of conflict between self-referential aims and the good of the *kosmos*. His solution resembles closely one attributed sometimes to the Stoics. Both one's own well-being and that of the *kosmos* are considered to be important, and, in fact, neither is understood as primary. The good of the universe is not instrumental to the self-regarding happiness nor is the perfection of the *kosmos* an aim which would constitute one's own happiness. Both ought to be incorporated in a good human life. What gives Plotinus' ethics an agent-centred spin is its emphasis on how the most perfect happiness can be attained. Since knowledge of the *kosmos*, of one's own place in it as well as the highest kinds of happiness all rely on a turn inwards, towards the soul's intellectual capacities and the One, happiness is tied to contemplation – to self-reflexive and -reflective mental states. The self is not singularly important, but promoting its true well-being by turning inward is the only means to an understanding of what is good *simpliciter*.

Admittedly, the wise man has lost much that one might consider to be essential for being a self and for acting in the moral sphere. We might not agree with Plotinus on the best kind of human life, and few will share his trust in universal justice. It is evident, too, that his main contribution does not concern the discussion about what measure of value we ought to place on someone else for his or her own sake, as someone else, an individual, a unique person with a unique life. He gives disappointingly few practical clues.[75] However, the Neoplatonic wise man has also gained something valuable. Knowledge of the complete world-order frees him from seeing the world and his own place in it from just one, particular and limited point of view. While over-attachment to our own particularity may lead to selfishness and egoism, the wise man is concerned about himself, but only to the extent that is reasonable in the context of the well-being of the whole universe. For a person acting in the public sphere of other people, this simultaneously detached and perspectival view could be extremely useful.

Let me conclude with two criticisms that the theory seems implicitly to raise. First, the impartial view is attainable only through hard philosophical work. Striving towards one's own wisdom is demanding, and therefore of restricted value to the common man with everyday burdens of survival in mind. And despite his likeness to the divine hypostases or even to the One, Plotinus was not an immaterial, godlike being. He could not be present everywhere. No matter how many people Plotinus wanted to bring to

[75] In that respect it should come as no surprise that the later Neoplatonist Simplicius wrote a commentary on a much more practically minded *Encheiridion* of the Stoic Epictetus.

understand the wonderful truths he had to offer, he simply could not work for the happiness of the whole of humanity – in doing so he would have faced the danger that no one would succeed in attaining happiness. That Plotinus recognised this restriction on the missionary potentiality of his philosophy – that is, the limits of the effect any one part of the cosmos can have on the whole – may be displayed by his talk of friends and friendship rather than strangers and societies.

Furthermore, although Plotinus incorporates the world and its particular situations into his ethical framework, the real world and one's place in it remain on the level of intellectual understanding rather than experience. The world with its particular places and situations is present only in an intellectual mode and not as truly *lived*. One's situation in the world does not conflict with the detached view precisely because it is one's place already seen from above rather than from the point of view of experiences and hopes of a vulnerable and desiring agent. In maintaining, however, that the only true reformation of the world happens through intellectual self-reformation, Plotinus is not alone.

CHAPTER 6

Losing the limits of the self?

In his study on those aspects which people usually connect with the notion of self, Galen Strawson lists two items that serve as a starting point for this chapter. Often, a common, non-theoretical understanding and usage of 'self' includes a non-explicit assumption that the self is a definite being in two senses. Firstly, that it is single, and not, for example, a group. It is a single thing in the same way that a block of marble is a single thing. And secondly, that it is a thing with a typical causal profile of things: something that can undergo and do things.[1] Since Hume's claim that we can never experience any self separate from experiences, any suppositions about a self as a single entity-like thing have come into question: nevertheless, the above features appear to be persistent features of thinking about our own nature. We have an experience of ourselves as at least to some extent unified beings with persistence in time, and with a role to play in the causal processes of the universe. A question remains, however, as to what extent the kind of terminology we use to talk about ordinary things and their singleness, such as 'entity', 'limit', 'definiteness', etc., can be applied to selves. Since Plotinus distinguishes a notion of self from that of soul, and since, as we have seen, he operates with a flexible idea of selfhood that incorporates several aspects, it remains to be seen where he stands in relation to the self's nature, i.e., whether he assumes that the self is a single thing with limits and causal profile very much like that of material things, or whether it is something altogether different, and if the latter, how it differs from other entities in the universe.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. I will first discuss singlehood, definiteness and the causal profile of doing and undergoing in the context of different aspects and meanings of selfhood, differentiated in the course of previous chapters. Being single and self-identical will be shown to be

[1] Strawson 1999a, b.

essential to the self in all its modes, aspects and experiences, but having clear-cut limits and a full causal profile depends on what sense of the self we are using, whether we are talking about (a) the embodied, composite self, (b) selfhood as a process in time, (c) the soul and its discursive reasoning capacity, (d) the pure intellect or (e) that capable of identifying itself with any of these senses, from (a) to (d). For this analysis, the chapter relies partly on material already presented in the earlier chapters, treated here through a different approach.

Second, Plotinus raises to the level of a normative ideal an experiential state – the union with the One – in which the self is said to give itself over and to lose its difference from everything else. The subsequent part of the chapter concentrates on this hitherto neglected issue, the possibility of losing oneself or one's limits. The experience described sounds dangerously close to a destruction of identity and those aspects of selfhood Plotinus elsewhere seems to think of as essential. It will be asked whether it is possible to maintain one's selfhood while simultaneously having an experience of merging with or being filled by something more powerful and unlimited than oneself. Since this state is the ultimate end which a human soul can attain, we must ask what kind of existence and experience Plotinus advocates as paradigmatic for human beings, and whether it involves features or a sense of a self.

Definiteness and the causal profile of the self

The two aspects or features commonly attributed to selves and pertinent to the current inquiry were, we suggested, the idea that (1) they are single, limited beings with a single nature, and that (2) they have a typical causal profile of entities that do and undergo things. In so far as the self is understood as a composite of soul and body, it has a limited nature. It occupies a certain bit of matter in the universe. This definite nature is, however, due to the formal aspect of the soul. According to Plotinus, matter as such is unlimited and undefined. It is incapable of any organisation, and forms give it its peculiar structures and formations. Form, size, dimension, and definite being all come from the form imposed on matter, and through this formal power the soul organises and sustains the body in being.[2] Matter is formless and without measure, liable to excess or defect, never to good

[2] E.g. II.4.8.1–25; 11.38–43; IV.3.9.44–50; Arist. *Met.* 1029a. This has been treated more closely in chapter 1.

or beautiful proportion.[3] Following the Aristotelian way of thinking, form and soul impose limit and measure onto matter. Such a limited and definite being is also intelligible, unlike matter on its own. The Platonist thinks further – unlike for instance the Peripatetics and the Stoics – that the solid things encountered in the sense realm are not basic, but what truly exists is that which gives them solidity and definiteness, namely the separate higher principles and paradigms.[4]

Like any other bodily thing in the universe, the ensouled body occupies its own spatio-temporal place. Not only do the bodies occupy a certain material slot of the world, they occupy, as was argued in the very first chapter, a place in the temporal succession. They extend in time and have a beginning and an end in time, and that extension seems to be occupied by temporal parts. Although the bodies are not sensible substances but conglomerates of matter and qualities, that is, images of forms, they do have a limited nature that can be tracked down both as spatially and as temporally extended things. The bodily and temporal self would, thus, seem to enjoy some definiteness of both its aspects, despite its close association with unmeasured and formless matter.

As an embodied thing, the self can act as both a patient and agent in the causal order of the universe. It is touched, moved, etc., by other things in the world, and capable of affecting changes in its environment. The sensible world of bodies is one in which, as Plato says in the gigantomachia of the *Sophist*, things affect and are affected, or do and have something done to them. What is at issue is the influential pair of words in antiquity, *poiein* and *paschein*, and the idea that it is the nature of things to be in these relations with one another. In the *Sophist*, this pair belongs to the realm of becoming, whereas according to the Friends of Ideas, the realm of being functions differently.[5] Plotinus accepts at least that part of the theory that holds that the sensible quasi-substances are the centres of the experience of the object as well as the sources of their activity.[6] Accordingly, the bodily self belongs to the normal causal system of the world. It acts in the world through its body, or the body as its instrument and extension, and is affected by the world similarly through its bodily being.

Although a hand is limited by its own quantity, when it grasps and lifts something it extends its power and control beyond itself.[7] Moreover, as a

[3] In trying to capture what in general is evil, for example, Plotinus contrasts that which is unmeasured (ἄμετρος), unbounded (ἄπειρος), without a form (ἀνείδεος) and in perpetual need of that which is measure (μέτρον), with limit (πέρας), has or is a form (εἰδοποιητικός) and is self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης). I.8.3.13–15; I.8.8.19–24.

[4] E.g. III.5.1.20–4; 6.6.33 ff. [5] Pl. *Soph.* 248b–e. [6] VI.3.4.36–7. [7] VI.4.7.9–15.

body ensouled by a special kind of soul, a human soul, it may be an instrument through which the soul transcends the causal order of the universe. As we saw already in the context of freedom and autonomy (chapter 4.1), human beings can transcend their material circumstances:

> When it is brought into body it no longer has authority in every way, for it is stationed in the order of other things. Chances guide, for the most part, the circumstances into which it has fallen when it comes to the middle [situation], so that it does things because of these [circumstances], but sometimes it rules over them itself and guides them where it wants. (III.1.8.10–14)

The true self is, thus, connected with the soul rather than with the body, because through the soul the human being is capable, at least sometimes, of mastering his or her surroundings and destiny.

The soul and the intellect are definite and limited in a very different sense from bodily things. First, they present true being which is present everywhere as a whole and thereby not limited by spatio-temporal constraints. Pure being, Plotinus says explicitly, is not like a stone but the same in number everywhere.[8] An individual soul, for instance, is present throughout the whole body but mixed with none of it. It does not reside as a material and limited thing in any location of the body, but is present in every part by actualising different powers in different locations (IV.2.[9]20–2; IV.3.22). But even if the soul and the intellect do not share all the limitations of bodily things, they are in a sense more definite than them. In bodily things, matter always brings with it some of its indefiniteness and unmeasuredness, whereas, on the other hand, as a form-like entity, the soul is altogether defined. Presumably this means that there is nothing random or unintelligible in it. Moreover, in order to be immortal, Platonic souls – and presumably intellects, too – need to be indivisible, and hence essentially simple.[10] The definiteness the soul possesses is, one might claim, definiteness without restrictedness, and therefore unlike the spatio-temporal limitedness of bodies.

Souls are, however, infinite in one special sense. They are infinite as power. The final nature of souls is not determined externally, but by themselves. In addition to their dependence upon the higher metaphysical levels, the souls constitute themselves from within.[11] Furthermore, the powers of the soul, and especially thinking and intellection, are also activities which

[8] VI.5.11.9–14.
[9] Note that by IV.2, like Armstrong, I mean number [21] in the chronological ordering.
[10] I.1.2.9–11; IV.1.1.17–21; 57–71; 2.35–48. By IV.1, I mean number [4] in the chronological ordering.
[11] IV.3.8.38–40.

are to some extent – or, as in the case of *noein*, totally – independent from material causation:

> But nature[12] acts on matter and is affected by it, but that [soul] which is before it and close to it is not affected in its actions [on matter], and that which is even higher does not act on bodies or matter. (IV.4.13.22–5)

The powers of the soul remain unaffected in their one-sided relation to the world. Even though, for instance, discursive thinking is vulnerable to the changing circumstances of the temporal realm, the thinking capacity itself is changeless and stable. Moreover, as its perfect paradigm, pure intellection is not even directed towards the world – as we saw in the case of the self-sufficient activity of the *nous*. That some parts of the soul lie outside the causal order is required also for the stability of the world-order itself. In Plotinus' view, if the soul itself were to change along with everything else in the sensible universe, what would guarantee the stability and continuity of the universe? What would ensure that there would be definite things with limits and not, say, a mass of irregularly mixed elements? Through the soul, the forms in the Intellect ensure that there exist definite, single things with limits.[13]

Soul's participation in the causal order of the universe seems to create quite special problems for Plotinus. As has become evident, since the forms and the soul are responsible for the entirety of existence, definiteness and formations of the material universe, Plotinus need not worry so much about the typical problem of the dualists, namely how the soul could interact with something as different as matter. If one accepts his hierarchical metaphysics and the idea that everything is created by a higher and metaphysically prior entity, and that ultimately everything has its origin in the One, soul's ability to cause changes at a lower level will be a part of this overall structure and in no need of special explanation. However, the very same belief in the downward order of causation in the universe that saves Plotinus from the problem of dualism gives rise to different kinds of worries. He wants to insist that since the soul is on a metaphysically higher level than the sensible universe, it itself as well as its powers are not affected by anything in the

[12] In a currently unpublished paper on nature in Plotinus, Luc Brisson (International Society of Neoplatonic Studies, University of Liverpool, June 2004) noted the different ways in which Plotinus uses the term *phusis*: as soul's ultimate power; as the body that is the product of this nature; and body's nature, the rational determination that belongs to the body and is a trace or image of the first nature.

[13] For example at III.6.2.49–50 Plotinus points out that the actualisations of immaterial things in general take place without any affection on the part of the immaterial thing, otherwise they too would perish.

world. The soul is and remains impassive. This raises the question of the status of perception and all kinds of experiences that have their origin in the world. Plotinus is at pains to describe these activities in a way which explains the phenomena adequately but does not compromise the soul's impassivity.[14]

His suggested solution seems to comprise two parts. On the one hand he attributes all experiences and changes in human consciousness to the composite of soul and body. They all belong to the 'joint entity' rather than to the soul.[15] It is the composite that uses the powers of the soul and that is affected by the experiences in the world. To ensure that the soul, through its role as the other – and more important, causally efficacious and responsible – part in the composite, will not be affected along with the whole of the composite, Plotinus postulates a kind of image of the soul, a trace which is united with the body.[16] This trace is affected in and by the world, while its cause and origin, the true soul, remains unaffected. This is not a mere sophistical manoeuvre: the move recapitulates the paradigm–image relation that is at the heart of Platonism and Neoplatonism. Substances and true being reside in the Intellect while the emanated sensible realm is an image of the invulnerable eternal intelligible paradigm. The affected trace of the soul, or in fact the composite of the trace and the body, is also 'self'. Plotinus recognises this loose sense of self, the self as 'the beast', as he says.[17] We are 'the beast' in the sense that we are living, moving and conscious beings with bodies and discursive reasonings, prone to all kinds of imperfections. We are responsible for this aspect of our nature and punished for its actions in the world. However, the simple and non-affected part of the soul is more genuinely the self. Since this is the paradigm that the trace imitates, ultimately this is what *makes* us living, moving and conscious beings, and capable of thought. It – rather than the image – is also that which remains the same throughout our existence regardless of whether we live a life of vice or one that is virtuous, as well as in disembodied existence. As we have seen, it has causal primacy and secures identity.

The bodily self is vulnerable to the suffering in the world.[18] Only as essential soulness is the self not something that undergoes anything, at least not anything that has its origin in a lower metaphysical level like the sensible. As a soul, the self is just action, pure doing.[19] It does not suffer nor is it the subject of any affection from the world. The intellect, too, may

[14] III.6.3–4 offer a discussion of this.
[15] IV.4.18.19–21; 20.1–3; 23.19–29.
[16] *skia*, IV.4.18.4–9; *ichnos*, 20.15–16.
[17] I.1.10.6–7.
[18] Or as Plotinus says, it is not outside matter or 'by itself'; I.8.4.14–15.
[19] I.8.4.25–8; IV.7.8[5].43–6.

be a cause that affects material or physical things, but as its causal efficacy happens through the mediation of one more ontological level, the Soul, it is even more firmly outside the material causal order.

Besides being invulnerable, at the level of the Intellect, the self has a paradigmatically definite nature. The intellects, as we have seen in the previous chapters, differ from one another. Although they are not spatio-temporally limited, they do enjoy some nature that is particularly their own, so that Plotinus feels it legitimate to talk about several intellects rather than one Intellect. They somehow constitute themselves as distinct from others by their act of self-conscious thought. Furthermore, their thinking activity which non-temporally or 'eternally' embraces the forms ensures that their functioning is entirely stable and unified.

In its true or ideal nature, the self is something that completely transcends the laws of the sensible realm and its sufferings. However, we should not take these remarks to lead to a view that the soul and intellect have an entirely non-worldly nature. The metaphysical hypostases are explanatory for the definiteness, limits and differences there are in the universe – the fact that the universe is not something limitless and indefinite like mud or water, but a plenitude of single and definite beings with limits and their own, proper nature and character. The significance of the soul's 'transcendent' nature is in its causal role in the universe as a doer, an agent, rather than something which undergoes, suffers or changes.

Note that I have hitherto been talking about the self mainly as a composite, a temporal process, or as a soul or an intellect. What, however, makes the self so interesting in Plotinus is its nature and capacity, which W. R. Inge called, rather, 'a wanderer', and E. R. Dodds a 'fluctuating spotlight of consciousness'.[20] If the self is actually none of the hypostases and potentially all of them, a power of identifying itself with any one of its aspects, and thus transgressing the metaphysical levels and their limits, is it at all the kind of thing that has limits and definiteness? Plotinus does not tackle the issue directly,[21] but on the base of what we have seen so far, we could conclude that for a self understood not as a fixed centre but as something that changes character through varying experiences, unity and definiteness are not givens but ideals that the self can aspire to and have in different degrees. Definiteness and unity increase in the soul's ascent – in its attempts to identify itself with the highest part of its nature. Moreover, this aspiration towards goodness – if successfully executed in the embodied

[20] Inge 1929: I, 203; Dodds 1928.

[21] The question of the possibility that the soul substance itself changes along with, for instance, the changes involved in the acquisition of habits is discussed by later Neoplatonists. Cf. Steel 1978.

life – would seem to result also in more freedom, independence and causal efficacy:

> The better soul rules over more, the worse over less. For the soul that gives in to the temperament of the body in any way is forced to desire or get angry, either abased by needs or made vain by wealth or tyrannical by powers; but in these very same circumstances the soul which is good by nature withstands, and changes them rather than is changed by them; so that it alters some of them and gives in to others provided that there is no evil involved. (III.1.8.14–20)

The virtuous life is one in which the soul masters and affects its surroundings rather than is fashioned according to them. *Ideally*, a self is thus not a wanderer, but a person who actualises his or her true nature as sovereign and good intellect.

For Plotinus the most serious danger to self, its unity and self-sufficiency comes from yielding to worldly circumstances through self-identification as the bodily self. However, the contemporary reader may feel increasing discomfort in facing the descriptions given of the highest experiential states the soul can – and should – attain. Let us next compare the danger posed by the enticement of the sensible and bodily realm to these cases which threaten selfhood at the other end of the hierarchy, at the peak of self-improvement.

Being bound and possessed [22]

A worry that Plotinus discusses, and one which reveals the importance he assigns to self-engendered activities, is how it is possible for magic and drugs to affect even a good man. If the self is ideally never a patient or someone watching what happens to him 'from the side', then being in the power of drugs or magic equates to a loss of what matters most to the self. 'Being bound' in this way connotes a loss of something crucial for us, our capacity to be conscious and to understand:

> And we must not think that [people] listen to other prayers in a state of deliberate purpose: for people charmed by spells do not act in such a way, nor, when the eye of a man is spell-bound, does the one who is spell-bound (*ho goēteuomenos*) understand, nor is he conscious, but he recognises only later that he has had an experience. (IV.4.40.27–31)

[22] A much earlier version of this section was presented at the annual meeting of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, in a session organised by Suzanne Stern-Gillet. I am grateful for the comments of the participants and audience of this session.

In the phenomena described, we may not lose all our limits or definiteness, but we do lose our unity as well as our particular role in the causation of the universe, namely our role as (self-)conscious subjects, agents and doers. For the embodied 'I', this is a loss of the self, a momentary sleep of what is most truly ours.

Furthermore, it is not mere rhetoric when Plotinus claims that actually *all* (practical) action is spell-bound.[23] Actions that involve the body and the causal order of the embodied universe are never entirely free. Although the good man may overcome many necessities of that realm, he is, nonetheless, bound to act according to certain restrictions imposed upon him. Remember that for these reasons Plotinus restricts that which is truly free, truly up to us and thereby inside our truest self to pure, theoretical thought of the Intellect: 'contemplation alone remains not spell-bound because no one who is self-directed is subject to spell-binding . . . he makes what he ought and his own life and work' (IV.4.44.1–2; 4). What is essential to self-possession is that one makes one's own 'life and work', that is, acts as the subject of one's own actions, and is directed towards things which are in one's full command. Being 'spell-bound' entails giving up one's own control and initiative, one's subjectivity and agency to something else. All activities that are directed outward towards the world are subjected, to an extent, to this 'spell-binding'. Even though these can never be purely up to us, in the ideal case, our relations towards the sensible world would also imitate the true self-sufficiency of inward-directed contemplation.

Notoriously, however, the normatively ideal states of selves also endanger the very existence and experience of the self. Both contemplation of the Intellect and its contents, the forms, and especially the so-called mystical union with or ineffable experience of the One,[24] may present different threats to the self.

In noetic contemplation, the soul becomes its objects and abandons all worldly concerns. The body as well as all personal features are seen as insignificant, if not downright obstructive. Embodied identity with personal memories and tendencies is given a very restricted value. Yet as we have seen, this is a threat to selfhood understood in modern and individualistic terms. At the core of Plotinus' self is not an individual, a person with personal characteristics, but a self-determined and -sufficient subject, that is, an ideally autonomous agent. As a paradigm of autonomous activity, the *nous* is entitled to the title of the true self.

[23] IV.4.43.18–19. [24] For the One as ineffable, *arrhētos*; e.g., V.3.13.1–6.

The ineffable experience of the One, however, would seem to necessitate a much more serious abandonment. The soul must ignore not just the outward world but also itself. Let us quote two main texts that bring out this new kind of loss.

> But just as it is said of matter that it must be absolutely unqualified if it is going to receive the impressions of all things, in this way, and much more, must the soul be formless if there is going to be nothing in it that could hinder its fulfilment and illumination by the first nature. But if this is so, the soul must let go of all the external things and turn altogether to within, and not be inclined to any of the external things, but being ignorant of all things, as it was earlier with perception, then in the case of forms, and even being ignorant of itself (*agnoēsanta de kai hauton*) . . . (VI.9.7.12–20)

Moreover, the self must give up all distinctions between itself and other things:

> He was one himself, having no distinction (*diaphora*) towards himself nor to other things – for nothing moved in him, no spirit, [and] there was no desire for something else in him when he had ascended – but there was not even reason (*logos*) or any intellection (*noēsis*), nor altogether him (*oude holōs autos*), if one must say even this; but he was as if seized and possessed [by a god] in a quiet solitude and having become a state of calm, not turning away anywhere with respect to his being, nor always engaged in himself, altogether standing still and having become a kind of rest. (VI.9.11.8–16)

Recall that thinking requires distinctions both between the subject and the object as well as between the objects of thought, and is a movement in the sense of being an activity, all of which these passages pressure one to leave behind. In the kind of state suggested, the soul would seem to lose its innermost nature as a thinker, and be carried away and inspired by something else than itself, something outside itself. In order to reach the peak in the Neoplatonic hierarchy, must the self strive to lose itself? Is there any way of preserving subjecthood while opening the borders between self and what is outside it?

We might begin, however, by inquiring what kind of state Plotinus actually denotes when he attempts in different metaphorical ways to describe his experiences of approaching the ineffable. It has been customary to interpret him as suggesting a higher kind of mental state, one that no longer has any ties to thought or even contemplation of substances. The highest state a human soul could attain would thus transcend the intellectual, leaving the status of the latter ephemeral. Based on texts like VI.9 *On the Good or the One*, it is, however, somewhat difficult to differentiate such a higher

state from pure contemplation of substance – the descriptions of the latter seem to go hand in hand with the former – and it has been suggested that the non-intellectual vision of beauty and the ineffable could actually be logically prior to contemplation. An ineffable intuition of goodness and beauty would coincide with the human desire towards the Good, to be then 'followed' by a contemplation of substance. The relation of priority and posteriority between these states would be, actually, a relation between two aspects of one and the same state, contemplation of forms, just as there is no real distinction between the phase in which the Intellect is produced by the One and when it turns back towards it. These 'phases' represent the complexity of the Intellect's relation to the One. In the same way, the soul's relation to intelligible beauty consists of separation and desire as well as unification in terms of contemplation.[25]

This solution is thoroughly grounded in Plotinus' metaphysics, and as such highly plausible. It would seem to leave open the question of yet one possibility for 'mystical' experience of the ineffable. Is it possible to transcend this double-sided experience of the Intellect all the way to the One itself? The problem with the idea that the human soul could *unite* with the One is the fact that the One is supposed to be complete and self-sufficient. If it were possible, as it were, to 'add' something to it, its completeness and uniqueness might be compromised. Thus the beauty available for the soul in those experiences would, rather, be beauty of the immediate product of the One, the Intellect, and hence beauty as the property of the forms as contemplated. This view is strengthened by Plotinus' metaphors of the souls and intellects as moving in a circle around, near and outside a centre, the One, or the One as standing alone and by itself in the most holy part of a temple, as well as by his claim that the One does not desire us but we desire it (V.1.6.12–15; VI.9.3.49–54; 8. esp. lines 36–7). The One remains beyond both substance and human soul.

For all its merit, this interpretation may not be conclusive. First, the nature of the One is not just a unique and perfect indivisible unity but also something limitless, a greatness that our mind has difficulties in grasping. Moreover, Plotinus does occasionally explicitly (as in the above lengthy quotation from VI.9.11) suggest that even *noēsis* is something that one ought ultimately to leave behind. Perhaps one reason for it is the fact that in contemplation, there is still some difference (*heterotōs*) between the contemplator and the contemplated, and even this difference is something

[25] Gerson 1994: 46, 223. Gerson underlines that his interest is solely in Plotinus' philosophy, and he makes no claims about the later Neoplatonic philosophy or the way Plotinus was interpreted by his pupils and followers.

we should be able to leave behind: 'Having no difference that [the One], therefore, is always present, and we are present [to it] when we have no difference' (VI.9.8.33–5). This, then, could be the kind of experience in which every part of the self is touching the God (VI.9.9.55). As has been pointed out by Gerard O'Daly, it is both hypernoetic and hyperontic.[26]

Yet if our most precious part is the Intellect, it can be asked why we should lose it and the definite nature and stable existence with which it endows us. If there is even a small chance that Plotinus intends us to transcend our intellectual nature to something more foreign, let us examine its repercussions. One way to respond to the worry is to claim that being in this special way present to an absolute unity amounts to acquiring perfect self-identity and unity, i.e. some kind of pure self-realisation of oneself as absolute, unlimited, and one. This would be some kind of hyper-identity. What is intended is not that there is no one experiencing the state of unity and bliss, but that what experiences it is most truly one (*hen*) and himself (*autos*), as the second of the long quotations above suggested. Losing the difference from everything else – the limits which distinguish an intellect from other intellects and souls as well as from the One – is a transformation into something richer than one's limited self, and hence not plunging into nothingness.[27] There may no longer be separate and qualitatively different selves, but that is replaced with a higher, more unified experience of what is essential to selfhood. This could be what Plotinus means by saying that one arrives not at something else but at oneself.[28]

Plotinus' other descriptions of the human soul's contact with the One are similarly not connected to absorption or assimilation. The proper approach concerning the One is not that of an intellectual vision but of a 'presence (*parousia*) superior to knowledge' or 'touching'.[29] Thus, while the distance between a subject and an object, between the seer and the seen is missing, it is replaced with the distinction between the one who touches and that which is touched. There seems to remain someone who has the experience, who is present to or touches the One.

Perhaps a more serious problem is posed by the claim that we become possessed by god: if the self's essential nature is that of a doer and a maker, a subject and an agent, does it not really lose itself if it loses this role and becomes an instrument of someone else, of god? The terminology of possession Plotinus helps himself to here is very different from spell-binding

[26] εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἐλθὼν ὑπερ πᾶν τὸ ἄλλο νοητόν, IV.8.1.6; ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας, VI.9.11.42–3. Cf. O'Daly 1973: 86.

[27] Cf. e.g. O'Daly 1973: chapter 4.

[28] οὐκ εἰς ἄλλο, ἄλλ' εἰς αὑτήν; VI.9.11.38–9.

[29] VI.9.4.1–3; 7.3–5.

or magical enchantment. This more positive phenomenon is *enthousiasmos*, a term used, among others, by Plato, of the better kind of possession by god(s). Yet this possession, too, 'carries away' and brings the self 'outside itself'.[30] One could try and understand the purport of this wording through a comparison with what Plotinus claimed about cognitive states. As we have seen, although Plotinus esteems epistemic control and rational subjectivity, this does not mean that he would assess the *content* of thoughts by their originality and uniqueness, by a special mark that an individual reason or intellect would leave on its thoughts. Since what is desirable in rational thought is the correspondence of one's thoughts with the intelligible structure of the universe, the role of the subject is not in creativity but, rather, in the way in which the rational subject manages and actualises the thoughts.[31] Being possessed by the One (if there is such a further state) could be analogous to this: what is important is the content of the state the soul attains when present to the One – that is, to be filled with its beauty and goodness – rather than the role the subject plays in *determining* the experiential content. The turn towards the One helps the self to actually 'exist more' and reach well-being,[32] as opposed to losing itself in the higher reality.

Nevertheless, what is expected from the self is the giving of itself over to something else, being a mouthpiece or instrument of something else, good though the possessor might be. This seems foreign to what the 'I' otherwise understands as its truest self, namely the subject of thinking and acting. Perhaps the ambivalence between being a subject and being possessed by beauty and truth is inevitable and inherent already in Plato: on the one hand, subjectivity is abstract, empty and thereby worthless unless it grasps the divine, becomes formed and possessed by divine reality; whereas, on the other, the capacity for rationalising, for forming arguments about the true and the good as a means of forming coherent, unified and well-thought-out ways of thinking, is the only trustworthy way of being a true subject and agent of one's own thoughts and actions.[33] If Plotinus were to add to this picture a possession by the One itself, without a mediation by the Intellect, that experience would transform the self's nature into something

[30] E.g. *Phdr*. 249e1; 253a; *Crat*. 396d. Cf. Thesleff forthcoming. One should remember that especially in *Ion* 535c it is far from evident that this kind of possession would be ultimately desirable. Socrates would seem to prefer control over one's thoughts to being filled by godly thoughts and thus 'getting beside oneself' – no matter how wise the ideas such a possession renders in the mind. Cf. Woolf 1997.

[31] Plotinus compares this to bringing forward certain theorems of a unified body of knowledge; V.9.8.3–7; 9.1–3.

[32] VI.9.9.11–13.

[33] For this issue in Plato's *Ion*, cf. Woolf 1997.

new, something we may consider better or more worthy, but something that, as it were, takes over when the everyday self quiets down.

We have seen that to be a self is to be an awareness, something that directs its gaze to other things, as well as a subject of thinking which reasons about and reflects on its experiences of objects. Such a self is a true subject in the sense of initiating its own actions, be they actions in the world or acts of pure contemplation. Moreover, the ideal self is not directed anywhere beyond itself, thus enjoying paradigmatic independence and self-sufficiency. The higher presence to the One inquired into in this chapter is in a sense one of these acts: it is sought by the self, it is the result of its efforts and turning to the One. But does the resulting state transform the self into something different? Is the self the ultimate offering we must make in order to achieve the moral and psychological *telos* of human existence? Let me borrow the words of Simone Weil: 'We possess nothing in the world – a mere chance can strip us of everything – except the power to say "I". That is what we have to give to God – in other words destroy. There is absolutely no other free act which is given us to accomplish – only the destruction of the "I".'[34] The turn towards the One may be the only truly unimpeded thing, the only power of which we are in sole possession of doing ourselves – the only autonomous act – but it is the very same act that endangers the subjectivity that accomplishes it. Yet in here, too, the impact of the union with the One on the self is ambivalent. For besides limitless goodness and absolute unity that allows no individual subjectivity, the One is also a paradigm of independence and self-sufficiency, a doer that does not derive its actions from anything else.[35] By the ultimate presence to the One, the self unites itself with a being (beyond being) that is paradigmatically autonomous. Whether or not there is something disconcerting about the fact that in order to reach it, the self needs, as it were, to borrow this nature from the One, may be a matter of individual taste and intuition.[36]

For the self, the limits are essential. Without limits and definiteness there could be nothing definable, describable or detectable, and thereby nothing countable or thinkable, nor the variety of things that act and are acted upon. If the intellects and souls did not wish to be themselves and govern themselves, that is, act on their own rather than exclusively as a part of something bigger, and if they would not come to live a period of existence in extreme separation, corporeal definiteness and limit, there would be

[34] Weil 1952: 23. [35] VI.8.15.8–10; 20.19–23; VI.9.6. Cf. Bussanich 1996: 43–4.

[36] Casone (1997) argues that Plotinus is motivated to preserve the distinction between individual experiences but, ultimately, philosophically badly equipped to make that work.

no point in talking about selves. Selfhood, one might claim, presupposes self-conscious separateness.

The experience of the unity with the intelligible enforces other dimensions of selfhood. It is a manifestation of pure subjectivity, agency, self-reflexivity and independence or autonomy. If a higher state of presence to the One is possible, it is an experiential summit not only of goodness, happiness and beauty but also of two aspects crucial for selfhood, namely unity and self-sufficiency. It is, however, also something for which one needs to sacrifice one's own restricted subjectivity and agency. Yet this does not need to mean that such an experience would altogether abolish the self as we know it. Plotinus points out that it is tiresome and difficult for human minds to approach the One since the One is formless and not delimited, but, by nature, soul is such that it grasps things through limits and definitions – through rational or intellectual activity.[37] The proper nature of the self lies in that activity. There is no danger of getting lost in the One, since just as there are no everlasting surf rides or other ecstatic experiences, the union is not of a lasting nature. The short experiences that one may have of the One illuminate our rationalisations and strengthen our intuitions about the right direction in this life, in embodied existence.[38] They are both beneficial to us as well as inherent in our nature, even if they do not exhibit all features of what it is to be a self.

One might claim that in the end, Plotinus gets to the bottom of the truly paradoxical nature of the self and its relations to the world. The paradox is this: while there could not be any selves without limits between them and the world – limits whereby selfhood is built on an experience of the world as something else, something outside one's own power and authority, an environment resisting one's movements and will – the self also aspires to a state where resistance would wane and it would find itself in complete and joyous harmony with the world, that is, to a state where it would no longer be so clearly separated and distinct from everything else. In other words, what gives rise to the definite being of the selves as distinct from the world and from one another is the very same thing that leads them to solitude and alienation. That is why the self tries to overcome the limits and definiteness that are at the heart of its being.

[37] Cf. e.g. VI.9.3.4–10. In VI.9.4 Plotinus mentions twice shortcomings in reasoning or attempts at reasoning as the cause for not attaining closer to the One (*endeia . . . tou logou*, line 31, cf. lines 34–5).

[38] VI.9.11.45–51. Note also that the treatise as well as the whole *Enneads* (as organised by Porphyry) end with this return to the everyday existence, rather than with the union with the One.

Conclusion

In literature since Plato, the city-state has served as an influential analogue and metaphor for the soul and the self. Here is a version of the metaphor from contemporary scholarship that illuminates two different understandings of the self:[1] on one view, the self is like a carefully planned and centrally organised city at the centre of which are the judicial, executive and administrative branches of government, all acting from a single set of rules. Radiating from the centre are broad boulevards. Power emanates from the centre to the city, and all the way to its outskirts. The analogy shows the self as essentially rational, unified, self-transparent, and governed by one single thing, the rational centre. This view is often attributed to Descartes and it colours many interpretations of Plato as well as Plotinus.

The medieval city is very different. Like Paris in AD 1250, it consists of guilds, grand families, religious orders, and old village centres. Such cities were loose confederations of semi-autonomous neighbourhoods, each defined by a distinctive internal organisation and distinctive procedures for foreign relations. There may have been a loose central organisation as well as attempts towards city-planning, but these functions were much harder to delineate and describe than the ones in a centrally governed and planned town. Analogously, the other understanding of the self is a complex layered configuration of many parts, dimensions and possibilities. This view fits both with the modern modular understanding of the mind and with some postmodern views about selfhood without any one fixed identity. In both cases, there is no single centre which would preside over the whole. No matter how clear our sense that the self is a single thing, and at least to some extent integrated, this model suggests that this impression may be an illusion.

These analogues are, of course, rough caricatures. Many scholars believe that neither of the models, as such, functions as an adequate description

[1] Rorty 1988: 214: Jopling 1997: 258–9.

of the self. On the one hand, it is hardly the case that any self could, for instance, act on the basis of a fully structured and integrated set of rational beliefs; the human *psuchē* is much more complex than that – nor is it plausible to hold that the 'I' would have a privileged access to all its own states. There are, among other things, different sorts of irrational states and self-deceptions, which suggest that the self is far from fully transparent to itself. On the other hand, within philosophy of mind, the co-operation between different functions has become one of the most pressing and difficult tasks. Moreover, behind the number of identities a human being can have there seems to be a more elemental unifying factor – like a sense of embodied agency, 'felt quality of bodily ownership and personal control', or a primitive self-referentiality of experiential phenomena.[2] Perhaps the sense of the self as something integrated – although not necessarily wholly consistent or transparent to itself – is not a misunderstanding, after all. Something of the radial and centrally organised model works over the medieval configuration. Somehow the two must coexist.

Plotinus has a rather interesting way of taking into account both these models and thereby both different aspects as well as the unified nature of the self. According to his version of the metaphor (IV.4.17.20–35), most people are like a double or two-faced city, comprised of a well-organised upper city – an acropolis – and the lower, more chaotic part. In a person in a worse condition, the good orders and advice of the upper part (reason) are disobeyed and ignored, whereas in the truly good man the upper city rules and sets in order the lower parts. The worst kind of man is like a bad political constitution, like a loud and unorganised common assembly in which the parts are disorderly, in which there is no one in control and the corrupt parts have gained an uncontrollable position vis-à-vis the rest. Such a self lacks harmony and integration.

The metaphor recapitulates the Platonic idea of a hierarchical society as an analogue for the rule of reason. As in the case of the present-day city of Athens, the fascination of a two-faced city lies in the co-presence of opposites. Think of the amazingly beautiful acropolis and its buildings that represent the very best of classical Greek architecture, with perfect, eye-pleasing proportions. That part is ancient, and has preserved its form throughout the ages. Yet the rest of Athens is very different. The new, ugly buildings of various and sometimes bleak style form the city people live in, and a background against which the acropolis looks even more astounding. Like the acropolis, the pure intellectual capacities, the fully

[2] Jopling 1997: 255; Zahavi 2003.

actual intellect, is the beautifully ordered, perfect, eternal and unchanging core of each self. It has a unified and organised structure as well as a stable identity. In comparison, buildings as well as other details of the lower town are partly in a chaotic order, but in places also organised along lengthy, straight streets. The embodied self, like modern Athens, has a nominal order and structure that enable its functioning. However, the town and its traffic could be much better organised, and certainly beauty has not been the primary issue in planning. As an antithesis to the acropolis, the town has few old parts and its feel is of something new, changing, developing as well as decaying. As multifaceted and versatile, it is also the part that is more alluring – and demanding.

The big question concerns the relation between the acropolis and its surrounding city. The rhetoric of separation and fleeing from the body may suggest that Plotinus advocates a partition of the acropolis and the rest of the city, especially since we have seen that the most important functions of the higher self are autonomous and independent from the lower part. This would yield a radically intellectual and one-dimensional understanding of selfhood. If the analogy is taken seriously, however, it seems that the self comprises aspects other than the fully rational core. Both higher and lower parts belong to the self even when they form a disharmonious and far from integrated thing. The motivation for the identification of the higher self as the true self lies in its role within the two-faced union. The ordinary life of the lower part does have important points of contact with the upper part. Its imperfect but undeniable unity, identity and shape are due to the regulating function of the higher aspect. It is, although in a defective way, its embodied extension. The self in time and matter possesses and uses, for instance, capacities similar to the perfect thinker within it. One of my main arguments has concerned the similarity of the structural remarks Plotinus makes. Among other things, the capacity to recognise individuals and kinds by the help of sameness and difference is innate to the rational soul, both discursive and noetic. Through its share of these capacities, the lower part does tend towards a rational organisation even if it does not always succeed in expressing this tendency. The inner self is the spring of the self-conscious and deliberative life of the composite. The rational or intellectual dimension dominates the whole picture, but the bodily dimension is not neglected.

Integration is a matter of degree and of self-improvement. The changes and impulses that the lower part encounters in the world force it to make hasty solutions, compromises and decisions that are far from ideally rational. Its functioning may, furthermore, be organised according to the wrong kinds of rules and guidelines, ones that could be improved. The different

aspects are truly integrated only insofar as the order of the upper part is imposed onto the lower parts so that they will be unified and brought into living contact with the rational centre. The higher aspect is thus that which makes the integration possible as well as the paradigm for the structure and order ideally attained by the lower parts through this integration.

Plotinus is thus not committed to the idea of the human self as simply a wholly organised and centrally governed city. He is not making the same mistake that the vulgar reading of early modern philosophy suggests, namely that the self is wholly transparent to itself, thus leaving us with the problem, for instance, of self-deception. Centrally organised structure and perfect regulation concern the soul's principles of organisation and cognitive competences in their pure form, not in their actualisation in the realm of change and matter. Few can claim to organise his or her life according to purely rational and coherent reasons. Quite the contrary, most embodied selves are under the illusion that their bodily character and the bodily life of pleasures is their true self and truest kind of life. But a being with the reflexive capacities endowed by the higher self is capable of inquiring into its own nature and into the meaningfulness of its existence. What Plotinus proposes is that although the acropolis is the part that no one actually lives in, but that people may merely occasionally visit, one ought to direct one's attention to it in all its beauty, and let this vision affect one's plans for the lower parts, and the order imposed onto them: that is, on what and who one is in the material realm of body, action and other people.

A rare species, the truly wise man may spend more time in the higher places. In his beautiful dwelling on the slopes of the acropolis, even the wise man hears the sounds of the busy market place situated at the foot of the hill. He does not stop to listen to the variety and prices of the food on offer, nor to the bargaining and quarrelling connected with it; but if need be, the sounds flowing to where he sits contemplating inform him when and where to go to satisfy his needs. He has much more to give to the lower town than he takes with him from there. Through him, wisdom quiets down the clamours and troubles of everyday life, and imparts a better direction to life in the world of perception and change.

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Index locorum

Aëtius
Placita (Plac.)
1.7.33 [= SVF II 1027] 68
4.12.1–5 [= LS 39B] 99
Alexander of Aphrodisias
De anima
84, 14–17 174
Anonymous
Commentary on Plato's Theaetetus
5.18–6.31 [= LS 57H] 100
Aristocles (in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*)
15.14.2 [= LS 466] 68, 76
Aristotle
De anima (De an.)
407b27–4078a28 76
411b7–9 64
412a19–b6 30
413a8–9 29
413a13–16 69
413b24–9 28
425b12–26 95
429b5–9 158
429b10–17 228
430a19–20 158
430a10–25 28
431a1–2 158
431b17 158
431b6–8 145
431b20–432a3 158
434a7–12 145
Categories (Cat.)
1b12–13 32
1a20–2 32
2a13 32, 33
Eudemian Ethics (EE)
1245b19–25 100
On the Generation of Animals (GA)
767b 84
De interpretatione (Int.)
20b14–23 48
Magna Moralia (MM)
1213a20–4 230
On Memory (Mem.)
450a 112
Metaphysics (Metaph.)
1015b16–19 48
1016a 46
1026b 48
1029a 240
1045a ff. 70
1072b18–24 158
1072b19–24 108
1074b15–1075a10 108
1074b33–5 158
1086b14–1087a5 65
Nicomachean Ethics (EN)
1102b2–11 119
1109b30–5 208
1109b30–1110a6 183
1110a15–18 203
1112 199
1113a 183
1113a30–1 181
1139a6–8 227
1140a24–8 220
1156b10 230
1166a32 4
1168a38 ff. 215
1169b6–7 4
1170a25–b1 94
1170b5 100
1170b6–7 4
1177b1–5 227
1177b33 218
Physics (Ph.)
206a33–63 44
208a20–1 44
218b21–219a10 51
220b26–32 48
231a21–4 42

Aristotle (*cont.*)
Politics (Pol.)
1334b20–8 30
De sensu (Sens.)
36, 12 100
148, 10 95, 100
163, 12 100
De somno
455a12–23 95
Topics (Top.)
103a ff. 34
103a6 ff. 141
Arrian
Discourses on Epictetus (Epict. Diss.)
2.9.3 4
4.1.62–4 206
4.12.15–19 199
Augustine
City of God
XI.26 174
Aurelius, Marcus
Meditations
2.1 231
6.44 42, 231
6.47 231

Calcidius
Commentary on Plato's Timaeus
292 [= LS 44D] 68
293 [= LS 44E] 68
Cicero
Academica
2.20 104
On Ends (De fin.)
3.21 230
3.21.70 231
3.32 220
Tusculan Disputations (Tusc.)
4.6.7 200
4.11–16 200

Damascius
Commentary on Plato's Parmenides *(In Parm.)*
II.252 28
Diodorus Siculus
Library of History
2.8.2 151
Diogenes Laertius (D. L.)
7.135 [= LS 45E] 48
7.134 [= LS 44B] 68
7.148 [= SVF II 1132] 68
7.51 104

Epictetus
Enchiridion (Ench.)
1. 199, 221
1.5 162
1.34 44, 202
7 202
14 195
53 234
Eusebius; *see* Aristocles

Galen
Medical Definitions (Def. med.)
XIX.355K [SVF II 780] 68
On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato
4.2.8–12 200
4.5.6–7 106
4.6.36 106
5.6.24–5 202

Herodotus
Histories
2.96 151
Hierocles
Elements of Ethics
1.34–9, 1.51–7, 2.1–9 [= LS 57C] 99, 100
9.3–10, 11.14–18 [= LS 57D] 99
Fragments in Stobaeus
4.671, 7–673, 11 [= LS 57G] 106
Homer
Odyssey
5.248 151
5.361 151

Origen
Against Celsus (Cels.)
4.48 [= SVF II 1074] 68

Parmenides
Frag.
8.4 41
Pausanias
Description of Greece
8.8.8 151
Plato
Alcibiades I (Alc. I; authenticity debated)
124a–b 5
128d 4
129a 5
129b 4
129c–131a 195
129d–130c 31
129d–130c 186
130d 4
132a–133b 5
Apology (Ap.)
36c–d 5
Charmides (Chrm.)
156d–e 186
165b–c 5
167c–168a 94

Cratylus
396d 251
Epinomis (Epin.)
981b–c 69
984b–c 69
Gorgias (Grg.)
467–8 180
491d–e 5, 187
503d–504d 76
525a 211
Ion
535c 251
Parmenides (Prm.)
130c–d 69
130e–131e 64
139c–e 136
144b 75
144b–c 75
146c–d 48
152a–e 48
Phaedo (Phd.)
66b–7e 30
67a–d 195
67c 211
69b–c 194
69c 211
78b–79c 192
78d 86
79c–d 107
79d 86
81a–b 87
82b 195
83b 220
115c–d 30
115c–e 195
117e 4
Phaedrus (Phdr.)
154b 211
246b–c 4
249e 250
252d 211
253a 251
253e 211
265d–266b 140
Philebus (Phlb.)
12d 166
14 ff. 36
16c ff. 36
16e 75
25d 140
38b–9e 202
38c–e 133
Protagoras (Prt.)
314e 4
Republic (Resp.)
387d–e 202
397b 151
398d 151
399c 151
407b–c 211
430e 151
430e–431a 5, 187
433a 151, 217
442c–d 188
443c–d 206
443c–e 151, 189
508d 107
509d 127
519 151
533c 154
534a 36
554c–d 188
554d–e 189
588c 10
589a–c 30
589a–d 206
617e 205
Sophist (Soph.)
216c 138
217a 140
226c 138
244 133
248b–e 241
253b–e 67
253d 140
253d–e 138, 141
257b–259a 134
259e 142, 233
263e–264a 133
Statesman (Plt.)
278e ff. 142
Symposium (Symp.)
207d 218
207d–208a 56, 201
207d4–e5 36
Theaetetus (Tht.)
152d–153d 56
158–9 48
173a 211
176a8–b1 222
176b 11
176b2–3 222
181b–183c 56
184d–185b 93
185e 95
185d–186a 135
189e–190a 133
186a 143
193c 139, 146
197b(–200d) 158
201d8 ff. 73
201e 133

Plato (*cont.*)
202a–b 73
206c–e 133
Timaeus (Ti.)
28a 36
28b–c 27
28c 211
30c 66
30c–d 66
30c–31a 97
30d 66
35a 151
35a–b 139
36b5–d8 139
36e 151
36e–37a 151
37a5–b1 139
37b–c 146
37d6–38c 42
41d–e 27
41–2 85
42b–c 83
42d–43a 27
43a–c 106
47e 221
49c ff. 36
51d 146
71b–e 104
71c–d 211
90b–c 229
90c–d 231
90d 133
Plotinus
Enneads (Enn.)
I.1.2.6 86
I.1.2.6–7 77
I.1.2.8 86
I.1.2.9–11 242
I.1.5 32, 33
I.1.7.9–14 145
I.1.7.14–18 195
I.1.8.15 83
I.1.9.8–12 194
I.1.10.5–6 9
I.1.10.6–7 244
I.1.10.13.14 227
I.1.11.4–8 99
I.1.11.5–8 208
I.1.11.11–12 98
I.1.13 8, 9
I.1.13.1–3 156
I.2.1.21ff. 220
I.2.1.18–19 195
I.2.1.16–21 217
I.2.1.43–8 151
I.2.2.13–18 195
I.2.3.10–19 194
I.2.3.27–30 133
I.2.3.32–3 218
I.2.4.6 195
I.2.4.18–25 148
I.2.4.19–20 151
I.2.5.4 217
I.2.5.9–15 193
I.2.5.18–21 104
I.2.5.20–1 203
I.2.5.21–31 193
I.2.6.1–2 220, 223
I.2.6.12–17 218
I.2.6.13–15 228
I.3.4.14–15 142
I.2.6.19–27 197
I.2.6.20–8 217
I.2.7 218
I.2.7.11–13 220
I.2.7.14–31 220
I.2.7.20–4 223
I.2.7.23–7 218
I.3.1.32 151
I.3.4.2–7 140
I.3.4.4–5 152
I.3.4.9–16 227
I.3.4.9–24 74
I.3.4.12–15 140
I.3.4.13–16 228
I.3.4.14–15 142
I.3.5.1–3 141
I.3.5.1–4 149
I.3.5.20–1 141
I.3.6.2–4 146
I.3.6.12–14 228
I.4.2.19–25 195
I.4.4.12–15 208
I.4.4.26–30 196
I.4.4.32–7 228
I.4.9.1–7 98, 119
I.4.9–10 98
I.4.9.13–14 120
I.4.9.14–25 120
I.4.9.28–9 121
I.4.10.1–6 121
I.4.10.6–10 121
I.4.10.12–19 121
I.4.10.22–8 122
I.4.10.22–34 222
I.4.10.24–6 122
I.4.10.28–33 122
I.4.14 227
I.4.14.1–8 195
I.4.14.9–11 123

I.4.14.13–4 195
I.4.14.26–30 123
I.4.14.30 54
I.4.15.16 209
I.4.15.22–5 223
I.4.16.10–14 223
I.4.16.21–30 222
I.5.7 57
I.5.10.11–14 219
I.6.1.41–7 154
I.6.2.18–20 150
I.6.2.18–29 76
I.6.2.27–8 150
I.6.3.6–15 150
I.6.5.9–17 232
I.6.5.54–8 194
I.6.6.1–10 194
I.6.6.13–15 89
I.6.8.3–4 155
I.6.9.7–25 181, 211
I.6.9.34–6 64
I.8.2.15–17 157
I.8.3.7–13 134
I.8.3.13–15 241
I.8.4.5 35
I.8.4.5–6 44
I.8.4.14–15 244
I.8.4.17–20 201
I.8.4.25–8 244
I.8.6.10–12 222
I.8.8.13–16 64
I.8.8.19–24 241
I.8.14.4 194
I.8.14.40–50 38
I.8.14.40–51 59
I.8.15.18 203
I.9 56

II.1.1 36
II.1.1.20–5 46
II.1.1.29–31 46
II.1.2.6–7 46
II.1.2.16–17 46
II.1.3.10–11 46
II.1.5.20–1 208
II.1.5.21 30
II.1.5.18–23 30
II.1.6.47 48
II.2.2.4–5 229
II.2.11–14 34
II.3.9.7–14 85
II.3.9.14–18 205
II.3.9.19–24 194
II.3.9.30–1 4
II.3.9.31 208
II.3.9.30–1 30, 195
II.3.12.4–6 68
II.3.12.4–11 67
II.3.15.13–17 198
II.3.15.17–24 205
II.3.15.25–8 195
II.4.4 64
II.4.4.1–11 64
II.4.4.2–6 132
II.4.4–5 64
II.4.4.15–17 132
II.4.8.1–25 240
II.4.11.38–43 38, 240
II.4.16.2–3 69
II.4.16.4 28
II.5.5 28, 134
II.6.1.8–12 39
II.6.1.13–23 69, 71
II.6.1.30–41 78
II.6.1.41–9 69, 71
II.6.1.48–52 38
II.6.2 39, 70
II.6.2.14–29 78
II.6.4.40–9 34
II.7.3 64
II.7.3.6.15 69
II.7.3.7–10 69
II.7.3.10–15 81
II.9.1.8–12 26
II.9.1.29–33 68
II.9.1.34–8 171
II.9.1.35–36 94
II.9.1.40–50 151, 162
II.9.1.48–50 166
II.9.1.50ff. 108
II.9.1.51 169
II.9.1.52 165
II.9.3.7–12 60
II.9.6.14–19 63
II.9.9 236
II.9.9.1ff. 232
II.9.9.28–31 233
II.9.9.45–6 232
II.9.9.72 234
II.9.9.74–6 232
II.9.15.28–33 216
II.9.15.40 223
II.9.16.7ff. 232
II.9.16.40 151
II.9.18 106

III.1.2.31 25
III.1.4 42
III.1.5.11–14 203
III.1.5.17 222

Plotinus (*cont.*)
III.1.5.22–3 203
III.1.7–8 86, 184
III.1.7.11– 8.13 181
III.1.7.14–16 200
III.1.8.4–11 89
III.1.8.9–10 183
III.1.8.10–14 242
III.1.8.14–20 246
III.1.8.14–21 183
III.1.9.9, 11–12 206
III.1.9.11 206
III.1.9.10, 12 206
III.1.9.15–16 193
III.1.10.11–15 209
III.2.1.21–6 26
III.2.2.4–8 229
III.2.2.15–17 137
III.2.2.15–19 68
III.2.2.23ff. 229
III.2.2.23–4 137
III.2.2.31–3 69
III.2.3.7ff. 229
III.2.3.9–13 152
III.2.5.14 25
III.2.7–8 230
III.2.10.19 185
III.2.13 233
III.2.14.17–20 90
III.2.15.23 10
III.3.5 229
III.3.5.46–54 208
III.3.7.10–24 60
III.4.3.21–2 78
III.4.3.21–4 184
III.4.3.22 82
III.4.4.11 98
III.4.5.1–2 183
III.4.6.6–7 171
III.4.6.8–10 229
III.4.6.10 183
III.4.6.23 78
III.5.1.20–4 241
III.5.5.46–54 208
III.6.1.28–30 192
III.6.1.30–7 192
III.6.2.49–50 243
III.6.2.60–7 193
III.6.3.1–15 192
III.6.4.12 193
III.6.4.34–8 86
III.6.4.34–52 192
III.6.4.38–43 77
III.6.5 203
III.6.5.15–26 196
III.6.6.37ff. 241
III.6.7.12–26 134
III.6.13.35 38
III.6.17 38
III.6.17.27–9 38
III.7.3.12–15 41
III.7.3.13, 15 42
III.7.3.15–23 41
III.7.3.16 44
III.7.3.19 42
III.7.4.2–3 41
III.7.4.24–8 49
III.7.4.30 42
III.7.4.37–40 41
III.7.5 136
III.7.5.21 41, 136
III.7.6.36 41
III.7.7ff. 37
III.7.8.50–1 38
III.7.11.1–5 43
III.7.11.14–19 43
III.7.11.14–34 43
III.7.11.19 42
III.7.11.19–30 65
III.7.11.22 38
III.7.11.35–45 42
III.7.11.51–7 46
III.7.11.53 44
III.7.11.54–6 141
III.7.11.56 44, 202
III.7.11.58–63 36
III.7.12.6–7 44
III.7.12.7–22 51
III.7.12.20–5 44
III.7.12.22 44
III.7.13.1ff. 45
III.7.13.52–62 50
III.7.13.63–9 52
III.8.2.27–34 68
III.8.8.32–6 162
III.8.8.32–8 184
III.8.9.29–32 131
III.9.1.1–4 64
III.9.1.12–20 157
III.9.2 208
III.9.6.1–2 174

IV.1.*1.11–17 39
IV.1.1.13–17 41, 47

*A. H. Armstrong's numbering concerning IV.1 and IV.2 is followed here.

IV.1.1.17–21 242
IV.1.1.57–71 242
IV.1.1.60–5 47
IV.1.2.35–48 242
IV.1.[4]1.17–29 92
IV.2.1 242
IV.2.14–17 121
IV.2.20–2 242
IV.3.1.10–12 173
IV.3.3.21–31 107
IV.3.3.27–31 86
IV.3.4.9–10 134
IV.3.4.15–21 30
IV.3.5.1–14 87
IV.3.5.1–15 63
IV.3.5.17–18 89
IV.3.6.11–24 89
IV.3.6.27–38 84
IV.3.7.8–13 30
IV.3.8.7–16 84
IV.3.8.12–16 209
IV.3.8.16 234
IV.3.8.24–30 35
IV.3.8.26 44
IV.3.8.35–9 75
IV.3.8.38–40 242
IV.3.8.56–8 56
IV.3.9 29
IV.3.9.20–2 61
IV.3.9.22–3 29
IV.3.9.29–34 106
IV.3.9.44–50 240
IV.3.11.8–14 69
IV.3.11.17–22 68
IV.3.13.1–8 86
IV.3.16ff. 86
IV.3.19.20 104
IV.3.20–3 29
IV.3.20.38–51 29
IV.3.21.5–8 29
IV.3.22 242
IV.3.22.32–40 30
IV.3.25.8–10 112
IV.3.25.13–14 117
IV.3.26.40–6 112
IV.3.26.45–50 99
IV.3.26.50–5 44
IV.3.26.52–4 112
IV.3.27.1–3 30
IV.3.27.1–6 118
IV.3.27.3 198
IV.3.29.19–26 104
IV.3.29.31–2 112
IV.3.29.33–6 118
IV.3.30.1–13 112
IV.3.31 147
IV.3.31.9–10 148
IV.3.31.9–20 202
IV.3.32.1–6 104, 202
IV.3.32.4–5 116
IV.3.32.5–10 202
IV.3.32.30 143
IV.3.59 42
IV.4.1.10–14 117
IV.4.1.14–25 133
IV.4.1.25–6 142
IV.4.2.1–3 173
IV.4.2.3–11 173
IV.4.3.1–4 118
IV.4.3.1–6 99
IV.4.3.4–6 119
IV.4.3.22–5 243
IV.4.5.11–13 117
IV.4.6.1–3 117
IV.4.7.6.1–10 145
IV.4.8 113
IV.4.8.4ff. 222
IV.4.8.9–12 113
IV.4.8.16–21 114
IV.4.8.17–20 113
IV.4.8.24–7 113
IV.4.8.30–2 114
IV.4.8.30–3 114
IV.4.8.33–4 113
IV.4.13.11–16 98
IV.4.15.4–5 44
IV.4.15.15–18 117
IV.4.15.17–18 44
IV.4.15.27–39 44
IV.4.16.1–7 56
IV.4.16.6–20 39, 41
IV.4.16.9–12 151
IV.4.16.18–19 86
IV.4.17.1–11 200
IV.4.17.5 201
IV.4.17.11–17 201
IV.4.17.19–23 192
IV.4.17.20–35 255
IV.4.18.1–9 28
IV.4.18.4–9 244
IV.4.18.10 97
IV.4.18.10–3 106
IV.4.18.10–19 195
IV.4.18.11–15 31
IV.4.18.19–21 244
IV.4.18.19–25 192
IV.4.18.21–2 208
IV.4.19 97
IV.4.19.2, 27 97
IV.4.19.12–29 106

Plotinus (*cont.*)
IV.4.20.1–3 244
IV.4.20.15–16 244
IV.4.23.10–11 147
IV.4.23.19–29 244
IV.4.24.21 101
IV.4.24.21–2 102
IV.4.24.23–5 106
IV.4.28.15–17 104
IV.4.28.19–21 193
IV.4.28.22–6 199
IV.4.28.35–53 193
IV.4.28.39–43 199
IV.4.31–3 101
IV.4.32.14–26 101
IV.4.32.52–3 46
IV.4.33.1–7 101
IV.4.35.1–8 183
IV.4.35.33ff. 232
IV.4.39.6–18 68
IV.4.39.6–23 69
IV.4.40.27–31 246
IV.4.43.1–10 193
IV.4.43.6 194
IV.4.43.13–19 207
IV.4.43.18–19 247
IV.4.44.1–2 247
IV.4.44.1–9 206
IV.4.44.4 209, 247
IV.4.44.9–12 168
IV.4.44.16–30 222
IV.4.45.2–8 101
IV.4.45.33–45 102
IV.5.5.30 100
IV.7.1 27
IV.7.1.20–5 195
IV.7.3.3–5 95
IV.7.3.19 35, 44
IV.7.3.19–36 46
IV.7.6.3–15 87
IV.7.7.8–16 30
IV.7.8.7–17 27
IV.7.8–8^{4} 27
IV.7.8^{5}.43–6 171, 244
IV.7.9.6–13 28
IV.8.1.47–50 61
IV.8.2.25ff. 225
IV.8.3.10–16 88
IV.8.4.10–12 61
IV.8.4.31–5 30
IV.8.6.6–10 60
IV.8.6.14–18 220
IV.8.7.17–24 60
IV.8.8.9–11 99
IV.9.3.26 145
IV.9.4.16–21 83
IV.9.5.1–8 83
IV.9.5.16–21 153
IV.9.5.27–8 153

V.1.1.1–9 61, 184
V.1.1.30–5 148
V.1.3.7–9 68
V.1.4.18 42
V.1.4.20–30 166
V.1.4.35–7 135
V.1.4.37–8 137
V.1.4.39–40 137
V.1.4.41 134
V.1.4.42–3 135
V.1.5.1 130
V.1.6.12–15 249
V.1.7.5–6 130
V.1.7.17–18 131
V.1.7.22–4 132
V.1.7.24–6 132
V.1.7.28–30 64
V.1.7.29–31 131
V.1.8.7 63
V.1.8.10 5
V.1.8.26 128
V.1.9.5 44
V.1.10.27 123
V.1.12.6–13 122
V.1.12.7 123
V.2.1.1–7 26
V.2.1.12–13 166
V.2.2.9–10 171
V.3.1.10–11 164
V.3.1.11–12 163
V.3.2 171
V.3.2.2–9 106
V.3.2.4–5 163
V.3.2.9 146
V.3.2.10–11 146
V.3.2.11–14 146
V.3.3.1–3 144
V.3.3.1–6 116
V.3.3.5–6 145
V.3.3.6–11 145
V.3.3.31 171
V.3.3.31–2 130
V.3.3.31–45 149
V.3.3.35–6 143, 148
V.3.3.44–5 130
V.3.4 59
V.3.4.1–4 130
V.3.4.8–11 157

V.3.4.15–20 172
V.3.5.1ff. 163
V.3.5.10–15 164
V.3.5.16–19 165
V.3.5.25–8 107
V.3.5.32ff. 158
V.3.5.41–8 165
V.3.8.20–1 107
V.3.8.21–2 107
V.3.9.1–2 173
V.3.9.4–5 89
V.3.9.30–3 147
V.3.10–11 227
V.3.10.24–7 137
V.3.10.27–32 72, 137
V.3.10.35–8 74
V.3.10.35–9 133
V.3.10.40–3 133
V.3.10.43 73
V.3.10.49–50 161
V.3.11.12 130, 161
V.3.13.1–6 247
V.3.13.12–22 109
V.3.13.19–22 109
V.3.15.20 138
V.4.1–2 224
V.4.1.10–15 108
V.4.1.12–15 166
V.4.1.20–1 108
V.4.2.4–7 131
V.4.2.10–12 157
V.4.2.15 109
V.4.2.26–36 224
V.4.2.44–8 157
V.4.2.46–8 157
V.4.2.46–51 229
V.5.1.9–10 157
V.5.1.10, 13 171
V.5.3.1–8 65
V.5.8.24 225
V.5.13.17 10
V.6.5.1–2 108
V.6.5.16–19 172
V.6.6.17 42, 44
V.6.6.20 42
V.7.1 78, 83
V.7.1.1 63
V.7.1.1–3 63
V.7.1.3–7 59
V.7.1.7–10 83
V.7.1.7–14 78
V.7.1.10–12 78
V.7.1.12 75
V.7.1.12–14 79
V.7.1.16–23 77
V.7.1.21 80
V.7.2.1–6 84
V.7.2.1–12 79
V.7.2.15–17 64
V.7.3.20–2 57
V.8.4.44–8 131
V.8.4.44–56 64
V.8.5.13–19 131
V.8.5.15–25 64
V.8.7.17–23 64
V.8.8.10 63
V.8.11.21–4 103
V.8.11.27–31 106
V.8.11.37–8 174
V.9.1.15 223
V.9.3 137
V.9.3.30–7 68
V.9.4.5–6 133
V.9.4.17–19 68
V.9.5 36, 229
V.9.5.4–8 157
V.9.5.7–8 165
V.9.5.12–15 131
V.9.5.12–28 157
V.9.5.13 166
V.9.5.13–49 64
V.9.5.27–8 166
V.9.5.32 147
V.9.5.40 41
V.9.6 169
V.9.6.1–9 151
V.9.6.11–20 69
V.9.6.12–14 68
V.9.8.2–4 168
V.9.8.3–7 251
V.9.8.5–6 168
V.9.8.9–15 166
V.9.8.11–16 227
V.9.8.14 169
V.9.8.14–15 168
V.9.8.20–2 132
V.9.9 227
V.9.9.1–3 251
V.9.9.4–9 67
V.9.9.11–13 251
V.9.10.1–10 65
V.9.10.9ff. 153
V.9.10.14 41
V.9.11 80
V.9.11.21–5 227
V.9.12 39, 80
V.9.12.1–11 79
V.9.12.6–8 80

Plotinus (*cont.*)
V.9.14 69
V.9.14.18 59

VI.1.26.18ff. 48
VI.1.29.10–14 137
VI.2.6–8 135
VI.2.7.12–14 34
VI.2.8 139
VI.2.8.1ff. 135
VI.2.8.1–24 64
VI.2.8.22 139
VI.2.8.25–31 139
VI.2.8.28–30 139
VI.2.8.28–37 65
VI.2.8.30–1 147
VI.2.8.31–8 136
VI.2.8.34–8 143
VI.2.8.37 136
VI.2.8.41–2 140
VI.2.11 134
VI.2.11–14 34
VI.2.21.17–32 70
VI.2.21.28–30 68
VI.2.21.44–5 70
VI.2.22.1–5 63
VI.2.22.1–6 89
VI.2.22.13f. 75
VI.2.22.16–17 75
VI.2.29.23–7 88
VI.3.1.19–21 65
VI.3.2.1–4 38
VI.3.2.4 44
VI.3.2.20ff. 54
VI.3.3.16 69
VI.3.4.36–7 39, 241
VI.3.8.20 38
VI.3.8.27–37 40
VI.3.8.30–7 34
VI.3.8.32 34
VI.3.18.19–21 85
VI.4.4.34–42 63
VI.4.7–8 64
VI.4.7.9–15 241
VI.4.8 64
VI.4.13.16–31 63
VI.4.13.20–6 75
VI.4.14.16 4, 9
VI.4.14.16–22 88
VI.5.2.13–16 41
VI.5.6.13–15 64
VI.5.8.12–15 64
VI.5.8.15–39 65
VI.5.8.20–2 64
VI.5.8.40 75
VI.5.8.40ff. 76
VI.5.11.9–14 242
VI.5.12.19–22 134
VI.6.2.1–10 75
VI.6.6.5–30 166
VI.6.6.23–6 168
VI.6.6.30 152
VI.6.18.17–22 166
VI.7.1.1–5 196
VI.7.1.11–24 198
VI.7.4.29–30 4
VI.7.5.21–2 4
VI.7.6.3–5 151
VI.7.6.21–7.6 83
VI.7.7.1–8 83
VI.7.7.8–16 38
VI.7.7.8–17 83
VI.7.7.9–17 86, 234
VI.7.8.30–2 67
VI.7.10 68
VI.7.10.10–11 82
VI.7.10.12–14 71
VI.7.11.10 137
VI.7.11.10–17 69
VI.7.12 67
VI.7.13.10 134
VI.7.15.14–22 166
VI.7.31–3 65
VI.7.32.3 132
VI.7.39.5–9 138
VI.7.39.7 143
VI.7.39.18 133
VI.7.41.17ff. 224
VI.7.41.22–8 173
VI.8.1.22–7 193
VI.8.1.24–5 209
VI.8.1.33–4 183
VI.8.2.2–8 183
VI.8.2.21–2 207
VI.8.2.33–7 199, 221
VI.8.3.1–10 201
VI.8.6.14–18 220
VI.8.6.19–23 198
VI.8.6.19–24 205, 221
VI.8.6.26–32 222
VI.8.7.16–30 182
VI.8.13.10–11 182
VI.8.13.33–4 182
VI.8.14.41 182
VI.8.15.8–10 182, 252
VI.8.15.14–21 182
VI.8.16.1 225
VI.8.29.19–23 252
VI.9.1.20–6 87
VI.9.2.15–16 88

VI.9.2.17–20 39
VI.9.2.17–22 41, 70
VI.9.2.30–1 65
VI.9.2.40.2 130
VI.9.2.43–5 134
VI.9.3.4–10 253
VI.9.3.49–54 249
VI.9.4 253
VI.9.4.1–3 250
VI.9.4.3–7 72
VI.9.4.31 253
VI.9.4.34–5 253
VI.9.5.29 162
VI.9.6 252
VI.9.7.3–5 250
VI.9.7.12–20 248
VI.9.7.20–8 224
VI.9.7.23–6 226
VI.9.7.26–8 225
VI.9.7.29 224
VI.9.8.33–5 131, 250
VI.9.8.36–7 249
VI.9.8.37, 41 26
VI.9.9.26–7 26
VI.9.9.55 250
VI.9.11 249
VI.9.11.8–16 248
VI.9.11.38–9 250
VI.9.11.42–3 250
VI.9.11.45–51 253
Plutarch
Moralia:
On the Intelligence of Animals (De soll. an.)
961c 112
On Common Conceptions (Comm. not.)
1069E 231
1085A–B 112
On the E at Delphi (De E apud Delphos)
392C–D 56
On the Fortune of Alexander (De Alex. fort.)
329A–B 231
On Moral Virtue (De virt. mor)
446E–447A 200
Lives:
Solon (Sol.)
18.5 100
Porphyry
Vita Plotini
8.19–20 224
10 224
Proclus
Elements of Theology 211, 124
Pseudo–Plato
Minos
318e–20b 226
Seneca
Dial.
8.4.1 235
Letters (Ep.)
24.19–21 56
41 231
58.19 75
58.22–3 56
65.2 [=LS 55E] 68
Sextus Empiricus
Against the Mathematicians (Adv. M.)
7.303–9 163
9.75–6 [=LS 44C] 68
Simplicius
On Aristotle's Physics (*Phys.*)
775.16 45
791.32 ff. 40
Soranus
Gynecology
1.27 100
1.49 100
Stobaeus; *see* Hierocles

General index

(Note that scholars are included only when they are discussed in the main text.)

action, 186–7, 195, 201, 213, 220
  and awareness, 100, 111, 122
  and reason, 180, 209, 215
  and the 'I', the self, 9, 171, 190
  autonomous, 186, 191, 203
  being the origin of, 181, 184, 187, 190, 205, 252
  free, 179, 182, 199, 209
  in temporal horizon, 111, 117, 119
  not 'up to us', 12, 199, 207, 247
  place in a good life, 15, 26, 27, 182, 224
  virtuous, 215–16, 217, 219, 220, 226, 228, 233
  voluntary and involuntary, 179, 183, 208
  see also agency
agency, 6, 155, 161, 179, 190, 191, 247, 250, 253
  and moral responsibility, 9–10, 208, 216, 222, 244
  autonomous, 1, 5, 109, 180, 247
  free, 10, 15, 179
  function of the composite, 2
  rational, 1
al-Ash'ari, 54
Alexander of Aphrodisias, 95, 100
altruism, *see* other-regard
anthropology, 1, 4, 6, 8–9, 25–7, 146, 191, 213, 229
  diffusiveness of human nature, 96
  individuality of human beings, 13, 61, 92
  parts of the All, 233, 237
  properties of human beings, 39, 70, 71, 74
  see also form of human being
appearance (*phantasia*), 99, 144, 165
  and attention, 114
  and consciousness, 98, 121
  emotions and other mistakes, 201–3, 204
  faculty of, 93, 112–13
  individuating soul's contents, 104
  role in thought, 93, 127, 147–8
Aristotle, 65, 78, 81, 170, 207, 228
  action, 183, 208
  de Anima, 158
  awareness, 94–5
  Categories, 38
  change, 53
  conception of selfhood, 2
  eph' hēmin, 199
  goodness, 181
  hylomorphism, 23, 28–70
  identity, 34, 40
  matter, 38
  Metaphysics, 70, 158
  Nicomachean Ethics, 199
  nous, 28, 227
  particulars, 36, 48, 49
  Plotinus' relation to, 6, 19, 28–42, 53, 70, 135, 241
  soul, 196
  species and genera – hierarchy, 67, 231, 235
  thinking and knowledge, 137, 158, 159
  time, 49, 50, 51
  virtue, 220
attention, 108, 113, 114–15, 116
audacity (*tolma*), 161, 184
Augustine, 5, 6, 19, 174, 211
autonomy
  ideal, 12, 186–7, 205–9, 247, 252, 253
  of agents or subjects, 1, 179, 180–1, 189, 203
    functional organisation, 109
    telos, 5, 205–9
  of mental states, 4
  see also 'up to us'
awareness, 94–5, 162–3, 208, 252
  diachronic, 93
  of body, 96, 97–105
  synchronic, 93
  see also consciousness; self-relations: -awareness

Barney, Rachel, 230
beauty, 132, 249, 253
  structured unity, 76, 150
becoming, 36, 38, 42, 44
being, *see* form; Intellect
Blumenthal, Henry, 18
body, 9, 106, 196, 217
  anonymous, 204–5
  awareness of, 96, 97–105, 110
  changing and perishing, 28, 46, 47, 55, 64
  continuity in time, 55, 241
  divisible, 47
  externalisation, 106, 193, 195, 198, 199, 207
  individuation and individuality of, 62, 105, 185
  needs and pleasures, 123, 200–1
  physical and extensional, 28, 47, 48
  relation to soul, 23, 27–30, 55, 185–6, 192, 193, 240
  structured matter, 89–90
  see also motivation; *sunaisthēsis*; self-relations: bodily self-awareness
Bolton, Robert, 18
Burnyeat, Myles, 75
Bussanich, John, 130

care for self (*epimeleia heautou*), *see* self-relations
Cary, Phillip, 6, 19
causation, 28, 29, 53, 192
  material or bodily, 55, 63, 89–90, 183, 241
  role in and causal profile of selves, 239, 240–6, 247
  two different systems of, 90, 91, 183
change, 33, 35, 36–7, 40, 50–1, 52, 53, 102
  of embodied self, 56
  see also flux
character, 1, 62, 84–5, 89, 102, 118, 183–4, 219, 245
  see also personality
Chrysippus, 200
Cicero, 230
cognition, *see* thought
collection and division, 136, 140, 146
completeness, 39
  and particulars, 58, 66, 67
  and selves, 90, 123, 155
  of forms, 14
  of intellect, 57, 155
  of universe, 66, 67, 86, 101, 131, 234
composite (*to koinon, to sunamphoteron*), 6, 13, 27–30, 92, 117, 157
  and selfhood, 2, 23, 125, 196, 227, 244
  'flowing' identity in continuity, 47, 56
concepts, 133, 141, 143–50, 152
consciousness, 2, 5, 13–14, 162, 210, 244
  different aspects of, 98, 119–24
  parakolouthēsis, 98, 112, 119, 122
  two-level account, 11, 14, 121
  unity of, 12, 23, 27, 126
  see also awareness; *sunaisthēsis*; self-relations: -awareness
continuity, *see* persistence
cosmos, *see* universe
Crystal, Ian, 160, 166

Damascius, 42, 45
Delphic commandment, 5, 18
Descartes, René, 6, 16, 17, 28, 159, 174
dialectic, 67, 74, 140–3, 148–9, 150–1, 152, 227, 228, 231
  see also sameness; difference; collection and division
difference, 134, 135–40
  as a principle, 65
  in perception, 95, 147, 148
  in thought, 128, 130–1, 134, 135–40, 145, 147, 148, 168
    between subject and object, 130–1, 157, 166
  ontological, 87, 135–6, 138–9
  qualitative, 134
Dillon, John, 220
disposition, 62, 89, 168, 183–4, 197, 203, 228
Dodds, E. R., 245
dualism, 13, 24, 28, 29, 185

emanation, 62, 65, 79, 81, 85, 130, 185, 224
  descending scalae of, 39, 54, 61, 69, 82
emotions, 179, 191–6, 203, 226
  control of, 15, 195, 217
  purifications (*katharseis*), 106, 194
  therapy of, 15, 185–6, 194
Epictetus, 199–200, 202, 206, 221, 222
eph' hēmin, *see* 'up to us',
Epicureans, 27, 223
epistemology, 72–6
equality of worth, 232
eternity, 40, 41, 45–6
ethical egoism and egocentrism, 15, 215, 226, 236, 237
evil, 65, 105, 184

Fine, Gail, 75
'first kinds' (*prōta genē*), 41, 65, 142
  see also sameness; difference
first person
  as a structure of the subject, 11
  first-personal 'givenness' or experiential self-referentiality, 2, 57, 96
  locution, 2, 9
  perspective, 1, 9

flux, 34, 35, 36, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50–1
of human subjects, 112
of particulars, 53
of temporal parts, 51
form(s), 41, 61, 63–76, 132
complex, 63–72, 76
distinguished from ordinary particulars, 35, 36
eternal entities, 13, 45–6
full actuality of, 41
interrelations, 128, 141, 142, 169, 228, 234
objects of knowledge and thought, 57, 58, 110, 127, 146–7, 148, 154, 169, 227
of human being, 80–1, 83, 144, 233
of individuals, 59–63, 76–90
of living being, 72, 135
principles of formation, structure and direction, 53, 150, 240–1
principles of unity, 54, 83, 245
prior or posterior to the intellect?, 131, 183
species, 83
structure and order of, 14
universals, 65
four-dimensional, -dimensionalism, 47, 48–9, 53–5
objects, 58
freedom, 180–5
human, 12, 15, 194, 206, 212, 246
of the One, 182

Galen, 202
Gerson, Lloyd P., 17, 18, 97, 107, 146–7, 160
Gill, Christopher, 16–17
Gnostics, 216, 222, 232
god-likeness, 11, 90, 125, 218
goodness, 85, 145, 219, 234
and consciousness, 119, 122
feature of the intelligible universe, 218
human desire and disposition towards, 26, 119, 122, 171, 197, 245, 249
non-individual and –subjective conception, 215, 233
of character vs. actions, 219
self-diffusiveness, 225
see also One
Gurtler, Gary, 18

habituation, 197, 220, 226–7
happiness (*eudaimonia*), 15, 215, 219, 223, 224, 232, 237, 238
awareness and experience of, 119–24, 253
two-fold account, 11, 57, 117, 119–24
vulnerability of embodied, 197
see also ethical egoism
Harte, Verity, 66, 67, 131

Heraclitus, 36
see also flux
Hierocles, 99–100, 103
human being, *see* anthropology
Hume, David, 239
hypostases
explanatory for consciousness and cognition, 14, 24–6, 43
functions in metaphysics, 24–6
hierarchy of metaphysics, 24, 26, 59, 70, 213
significance for anthropology and selfhood, 10, 18, 24–6, 59
terminology of, 24
truth of the universe, 55
see also Soul; Intellect; One

'I', 9, 11, 96, 123, 124
identity, 136
in continuity, 13, 34, 46, 47, 56
Kantian ego-pole, 2, 9
notions of, 13, 34
numerical, 40, 45, 46, 52
of the inner 'I', 119–24
perfect, 250
see also One
personal, 1, 4, 17, 18, 56, 93, 111, 119, 209–10, 240, 247
self-, 32, 34, 41, 49, 51, 53, 224, 239
through time, 39, 46–7, 53, 92, 111
see also Intellect: identity with objects
individuality, 1, 13, 59–63, 76–85, 90, 118, 180, 185, 204, 247
individuals, 137
human, 32, 59–63, 84, 92, 180, 181, 247
see also particulars; forms of individuals
individuation, 13, 32, 37, 76, 78–9
of forms, 74
of moments or instants, 50–2
principle of, 59, 62
Inge, W. R., 245
innate powers of the soul, 11, 14
inside–outside distinction, 103, 105
ideal, 163
in relation to activity and passivity, 199, 203, 206
place of the body in, 106, 198
rests on self-consciousness, 110
Intellect (hypostasis and paradigm), 62, 82, 109, 129–34, 157–8, 168
the complete living being, 67
dividing and undivided, 132
identity with objects (forms), 12, 14, 89, 157–8, 160, 162, 167, 170, 244
many, complex, 65, 73, 74, 128, 129–34, 151, 153, 169

perfect thinker, 14, 128, 153–4, 155, 227
principle of the intelligibility of the universe, 64, 73, 153–4, 155
principle of rational competences and epistemic subjectivity, 25–6, 121, 131, 149, 153–4, 155, 160, 172
relation to the One, 224, 249
role in emanation and creation of the universe, 25, 64, 144, 224, 243
self-knowledge, 158, 161–70, 171, 173
self-sufficient, 108
significance for and relation to ethics, 218, 231
thinking and self-thinking, 63, 98, 108, 132, 159–60, 167–8
unified by self-awareness, 108, 110
see also intellects; eternity; thought: noetic; self: ideal
intellect(s), 107, 129–34
having true unity and identity, 56
identity with objects (forms), 12, 14, 89, 107, 143, 227
outside the material causal order, 244
own existence and the certainty of it, 174
particulars or individuals, 85–7, 88, 89, 90, 245, 252
principles of cognition, 25–6, 139, 149
ruling body, 55
self-knowledge, 58
see also Intellect; self-relations: self-intellection *and* self-reflexivity
intellectualism, 26, 31, 125, 185–6, 191
intelligibility, *see* thought; Intellect; structure; knowledge
internal–external, *see* inside–outside distinction
inward turn (*epistrophē eis to eisō*), 5, 6–7, 155, 157, 210–11, 237

Kalligas, Paul, 87
Kant, Immanuel, 2, 10, 17, 23, 170, 180, 199
knowledge, 75, 148, 149, 151, 164
and goodness, 195, 216
immediacy and infallibility, 110, 157, 163
in action, 215, 227–30, 232
'kind of' (i.e. immediate recognition of body and its states), 97, 102, 103
perfect, 14
systematic, 127, 128, 141, 150, 152, 154, 155
two kinds of, 151–2
see also thought: noetic
Korsgaard, Christine, 187
Krüger, Manfred, 19

Lewis, David, 47, 53, 55
life, 44, 53, 128
and becoming, 44
relation to time, 42, 49, 50, 117
Locke, John, 6, 7, 17, 111, 198
logos
ontological ('rational forming principle'), 20, 68–70, 75, 88–90, 135, 150, 152
actualisation of, 44, 46, 47, 51, 84
and knowledge, 58, 74–6, 142
composing (human) individuals, 62
expressions of higher powers, 39, 68, 69, 82
immanent principles, 54, 81, 84, 94
in the species-genera – hierarchy, 71–2
'laws of nature', 69
levels of, 68
qualities, 78
role in individuation and individuality, 61, 63, 77, 78, 79, 81, 171
spermatikos, 68
'reason', 'account' or 'statement', 66, 73, 133
Long, Anthony A., 17

Marcus Aurelius, 5
matter
and individuation, 79, 85, 240–1
and time, 55
as non-being, 55
as privation, 28, 38
evil, deformation and indefiniteness, 65, 242
intelligible, 64
reception of formal power, 38, 39, 64, 80
McCabe, M. M., 17
memory, 93, 98, 111–19, 154, 172, 173, 247
division into two kinds, 118
mental connectedness, 111, 117, 123, 124
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 204
Middle Platonism, 19
Miller, F. D., 48, 49–52
motivation(s), 187–91
in Plato, 187
mystical experience, so-called, *see* One: union with

Nehamas, Alexander, 17
Nous, nous, *see* Intellect; intellects; thought: noetic

Occasionalism, 54
O'Daly, Gerard, 18, 170, 250
one
and selfhood, 239
in continuity, 34, 46–7
numerically, 35
see also identity: numerical; unity
One, 121, 130–1
beyond intelligibility and thought, 73, 74, 132
beyond virtue, 218

One (*cont.*)
cause and principle of unity, 25–6, 71
goodness, 25–6, 211, 234, 253
normative ideal, 26
overflowing, 54, 225
relation to the Intellect, 65, 130, 151, 161–2, 224–5, 249
self-awareness, 109
self-sufficiency and freedom, 26, 182, 184, 249
simple, 73, 133, 169, 197, 207
telos, 15, 237
transcendent cause, 25, 243
union with, 12, 15, 96, 221, 224, 226, 227, 234–5, 240, 247, 248–51, 252, 253
order, *see* structure
other-regard, 213, 215, 217, 226
ownness, 11, 103–5, 167, 198, 206

part(s)
and wholes, 69, 70, 150, 169
in the harmony of the universe, 229
in knowledge and cognition, 66, 74, 141, 152, 163, 169
in perception, 94, 114
in selfhood, 108, 109, 189, 196–7, 207
'logical', 66, 71–2, 73, 88
spatial, 34, 95
temporal, 34, 47
particulars
actualisations of formal power, 82
bundles of properties, 36, 37, 38, 39
distinguished from forms, 35, 36
episodic, 34, 48, 49–52
human beings, 39, 62
images of real beings, 33, 34
localised in time, 45
temporal, 13, 32–53, 58
things, 32–53, 64
unified, 13, 32, 33, 39
see also individuals; anthropology
passions, *see* emotions
perception, 143, 144–6, 149–50, 155, 172, 173, 192, 201
demoted conception, 122, 200, 204
unity of, 93
perfection, 12, 60, 90, 118
of soul, 125, 185
of universe, 232, 236
persistence, 33, 37, 46, 47, 53, 55
person, 76, 120, 122, 124, 145, 179
as a composite, 9, 15, 92
as personal, 9
the terminology of, 9, 10
personal identity, *see* identity
personality, 9, 10, 56, 84–5, 186, 204
lack of, 12, 211, 247
see also character
phantasia, *see* appearance
Philoponus, 116
Plato, 5, 19, 24, 30, 65, 151, 202, 211
Alcibiades I, 195, 198
care for oneself, 5
Charmides, 94
conception of selfhood, 17, 191, 198
dialectic, 67
epistemology, 57, 126–7
Gorgias, 180, 187, 211
greatest kinds (*megista genē*), 41, 135
motivation and selfhood, 186, 187, 204
ontology, 13, 36–7, 57, 62, 66–7, 68, 86
Parmenides, 62, 64
Phaedo, 77, 86, 87, 192, 195, 205, 221
Pheadrus, 211
Philebus, 202
relation between the mind and the world, 6
Republic, 187, 188, 211, 225, 226
sameness and difference, 138–9, 140
self-knowledge, 94
Sophist, 41, 62, 66, 67, 74, 133, 135, 136, 138, 142, 241
soul's separate existence, 28
Theaetetus, 73, 75, 93, 95, 143, 158
Timaeus, 36, 37, 38, 62, 66–7, 84, 85, 101, 104, 105, 132, 138, 205, 221, 229, 231
time, 48
tripartite psychology, 196
virtue, 219, 220
plenitude, 39, 70
principle of, 60, 61, 82
Plutarch, 56
politics, 214
Porphyry, 214, 224–5
Posidonius, 202
privacy, 6, 17, 110, 117, 167, 180
proairesis, 183
procession, *see* emanation
properties, 38–40
and change, 35, 47, 52, 53
bundles of, 36, 37, 82
completions of essence, 39
denial of essential, 37, 39–40
qualities, 39, 70, 78, 104, 132
proprioception, 14, 103
see also sunaisthēsis
providence, 181, 233, 236
purification, *see* emotions; body: externalisation

qualities, *see* properties

rationality, 9, 87, 156, 157, 180, 181
see also reason; thought

reason, 28, 121, 145, 188, 193, 206–7, 208
see also thought; Intellect; intellect; self: higher or rational
recollection, 126, 128, 146, 147
see also knowledge; thought: noetic
reflection, 1, 9, 96, 98
reflexivity, 1–2, 3, 9, 10, 97, 156
as a feature of awareness, 94, 100
vs. reflection, 96, 98
reincarnation, 78, 83, 183, 233
representation, 99, 117, 143, 146, 171
see also appearance
responsibility, *see* agency

saliency, *see* attention
sameness
in perception and thought, 128, 137, 145, 147, 148, 168
principle, 65
related to selfhood and personal identity, 32
self-sameness, 4, 41, 132, 136
stability, 40
see also identity
Sceptics, 15
Seigel, Jerrold, 19
self
causal profile of, 239, 240–6
centre of conscious awareness, 12, 109
conceptions of, 3, 16–17
dimensions of, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 121, 173, 184, 239
divided or disunified, 14, 15, 91, 148, 155, 207
discontinuity in, 12, 56, 120, 126
embodied ('lower'), 10, 11, 13, 161, 172, 229, 241
acting in the world, 241
deficient, 15, 90, 185
in time, 13, 15, 56
psychological continuity, 56, 117, 175
relation to the intellect, 156, 183, 209
see also self-relations: self-knowledge; thought: discursive; emotions
empirical vs. transcendental, *see* Kant
externalisation of bodily and imperfect aspects, 27, 198, 204, 207
see also body: externalisation
given vs. achieved, 6, 15, 17, 189, 209, 245
given vs. ideal, 3, 11, 15, 17, 26, 27, 125, 126, 149, 156, 181, 209, 210
ideal, i.e., intellect, 156, 160, 170, 173, 211, 229, 246, 247, 250, 252
integration of, 15, 155, 156, 209
limits and separateness, 15, 253
loss of, 12, 209–10, 240, 246–53
normative and regulative ideals, 156, 203, 213, 247
normativity of the notion, 2–3, 5, 8, 11
ontological foundation and metaphysical location, 13, 15, 25, 33, 240–6
private, inner space, 6, 7, 211
(temporal) process, 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, 56, 92, 111–25
rational or reflective ('higher'), 11, 12, 13, 14, 57, 110, 120, 149, 155, 188, 195, 227
perfect, 10, 11
reified notion, 15, 17, 120–1, 123, 125, 185–6, 191, 242
social, 16, 105, 238
source of unity, coherence and stability, 129, 155
'spotlight of consciousness', 12, 229
two-dimensional account, 13, 23–4, 30–1, 58, 92, 93, 119, 120, 121, 126, 143, 156, 204
unity and identity, 32, 239, 240, 245, 247
see also unity; identity
vocabulary in antiquity, 3–4, 5, 10, 31, 157
see also subject; subjective; self-relations; memory; person; personality
self-relations
given
experiential self-reference, 2, 96, 170
self-awareness, 17, 20, 112, 157, 159; as reflexive, 2, 98; bodily, 2, 8, 97–103, 105, 163; immediacy of, 97–100; of one's own mental acts, 159; role in unity, 95, 109, 111; *see also* proprioception; *sunaisthēsis*
self-determination (*to autexousion*), 2, 7, 12, 15, 17, 61, 161, 179, 181, 190, 212, 247
self-intellection, 107, 158, 160, 170, 173
self-perception, *see* proprioception, *sunaisthēsis*
self-reflexivity, 9, 97, 107, 158, 160, 161, 164, 165, 237, 253
normative
care of the self, 5
self-annihilation, 12, 15
self-constitution, -creation, 3, 11, 13, 15, 125, 131, 180, 186, 187, 188–90, 209–10, 228
self-control, 5, 11, 12, 179, 228
self-identification, 5, 12, 156, 184, 218, 246
self-improvement, -development, 3, 5, 12, 15, 57, 172, 175, 209, 213
self-inquiry, 156, 172, 173
self-integration, 125, 156, 175
self-realisation, 5, 11, 12, 13, 15, 125, 209, 211, 228, 229, 250
self-reflection or -understanding, 161, 162, 172, 175, 226, 237
self-reformation, 223–4
both given and normative
introspection, 97, 162

self-relations, both given and normative (*cont.*),
self-knowledge, 2, 5, 14, 55, 57, 58–9, 107, 156–73, 174
self-mastery, 208
self-possession, 185, 206, 207
self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), 12, 129, 155, 156, 179, 182, 206–7, 208, 219, 246, 247, 252, 253
Seneca, 56, 235
sensible realm, *see* becoming
Silverman, Allan, 37
Smith, Andrew, 224
Socrates, 5, 219, 220
Sorabji, Richard, 17, 56
Soul (hypostasis)
non-divided, 52
principle of living and cognitive functions, 25–6
role in becoming and emanation, 25, 52, 54
structure shared by all souls, 30, 82
time as the life of the, 44, 49, 50, 117
soul(s), 25, 77, 86, 87, 173, 220, 242–4
ascent, 12, 61, 62, 77, 86, 245
as personal survival, 88, 124
descent or fall, 60–1, 90, 183, 184, 252
forming vs. rational, 89–90, 193
immortal, 77, 86, 232
impassivity, 77, 244
individual, 30, 84, 85–6, 90
'intelligible universe', 78, 82, 184, 229
presence everywhere, 29
principle of consciousness and apprehension, 99, 132–3
principle of movement and life, 25–6, 27
principle of unity, 92
rational, 11, 86
relation to body, 23, 27–30, 89, 105, 171, 185–6, 192, 193, 240
relation to intellect(s), 88–90, 132–3, 154, 228
relation to time, 44, 117
role in creation of the universe, 132–3, 171, 234
trace or shadow of, 28, 192, 244
undescended, 124
unity of all, 30
Soul of the All, 30, 38, 78, 83, 85, 86, 89
Steel, Carlos, 18
Stoics, 80, 106, 123, 162, 219
action and virtue, 223, 230–1
emotion, 193, 194, 199, 202
influences on Plotinus, 5, 6, 19–20, 105, 123, 206
cosmology and cosmopolitanism, 231–2, 235, 237
eph' hēmin, 199–200, 204
logos, 68, 69
sunaisthēsis, 99–100, 110
materialism rejected by Plotinus, 19–20, 27, 64, 110, 170, 241
self-appropriation, 99
universal causal determinism, 181
Strawson, Galen, 239
structure (and order), 138
and knowledge, 75–6, 149–55, 169
and self-awareness, 101, 108–9, 111
intelligible, 14, 135, 151, 183, 225, 228
in thought, 169
of human beings, 62, 66, 67, 81, 83, 96, 101, 108
of the universe, 24, 67, 101, 125, 132, 135, 175, 181, 228, 229, 232, 233, 235, 236
sensible, bodily or material, 77, 94, 183
subject, 250
as active, 198, 252
of change, 7
of choices, 180
of consciousness, 12, 13–14, 92–5, 247
of experience, 1, 2, 9, 92, 116
of movement and bodily functions, 3
of reasoning, of thought, 3, 10, 12, 15, 126, 171, 174, 251
discursive (fallible) thinking, 11, 143, 170–4
knowledge, 156, 157, 159
noetic thought or intellection, 86, 111, 161, 163
self-knowledge, 165–70
of self-awareness, 10, 13–14, 109, 111
rudimentary stance, 161
see also agency
subjective
appearances or experiences, 4, 104, 110, 167
conception of good, 215
freedom and agency, 180, 183
notion of selfhood, 16–17, 198
subjectivity, 160, 247, 252, 253
abstract and thin conception, 109, 167, 170, 251
fleeing the objectifying gaze, 15, 172
in embodied thought, 173–4
paradox of, 14, 160, 166
particular, 11
rational, 17, 61, 92, 161–70, 174
shared structures of, 10
unifying self-awareness, 95
substance
distinction between real and *quasi*-, 34, 38, 39, 54
eternal and indestructible, 64
in continuity, 49, 50
of individuals, 88
role in thought and knowledge, 131–2, 153, 166
see also form

sunaisthēsis, 98–103, 105, 108–9, 112, 113–16, 253
see also proprioception; self-relations: self-awareness

Taylor, Charles, 19
third-person
perspective, 1, 9, 153
theories, 16
thought, 72, 93, 251
coherence and consistency, 11, 14, 94, 127, 128, 152, 153–4, 155, 208
complexity and definitions, 73, 253
see also forms: complex
discursive, 11, 42, 44, 84, 127, 128, 129–30, 148, 149, 157
imperfect, 57, 154, 200, 204, 208
representational, 58, 127, 129–30, 143
self-knowledge, 170–4
temporal succession, 93, 133
duality between the subject and the object, 131, 249
independence from material causation 183
noetic, 11, 86, 110, 127, 128, 129–30, 153–4, 157, 245
identity with the object, 137, 143, 170
independent and self-sufficient, 206–7, 247
non-representational and -intentional, 96, 108, 127, 129–30
principle of discursive thought and dialectic, 142, 148, 149
self-knowledge, *see* Intellect: self-knowledge; self-relations: self-knowledge
threat to selfhood, 247
timeless or eternal, 169
see also Intellect: principle of rational competences and epistemic subjectivity; knowledge; rationality; reason; structure: in thought
time
and succession, 42, 44–5, 46, 47, 53, 241
episodic vs. dynamic, 44–5, 48, 49, 50, 52–6
idealistic account of, 43
instants of, 47, 48, 49, 50–2
moving image of eternity, 42, 53
real vs. manifested, 43
realm of, 41, 42, 49, 50, 53
relation to change, 40, 53
relation to life, 42, 117
see also particulars: temporal; self: (temporal) process; thought: discursive, temporal succession; unity: diachronic
tolma, *see* audacity
truth, 26, 31, 66, 73

uniqueness, 90
see also subjective; privacy
unity
and beauty, 76
as a thinker, reason, 12, 14, 23, 126, 157, 208, 245
consisting of parts, 34, 72, 196–7
diachronic, 46–53, 56, 117, 239
of consciousness, 12, 23, 27, 92, 94, 111, 126
bodily or sunaisthetic, 100–3, 108
of embodied human beings, 71, 81, 83, 90, 92
of experience and perception, 93, 96, 100
of particulars, 13, 32, 33, 37, 39, 72
of self, 11, 14, 91, 190, 191, 196–7, 207, 208, 211, 239, 245, 246, 247, 250, 253
of the intelligible, 169
see also Intellect
perfection and completeness, 13, 40–2, 169, 250
see also One
precondition for existence, 88
synchronic, 111
see also one; self-relations: self-awareness; *sunaisthēsis*; identity
universal, universality, 65
goodness, 180, 183
intellect's contents, 79
shared features of mind's functioning, 11
shared objects of intellects, 12, 15, 167
universe, 101, 211, 214, 233
intelligible order and human relation to it, 87, 155, 210, 216, 227, 230, 233
one's place in, 229, 233, 234, 236, 237
perfect and complete, 60, 66, 67, 131
see also structure: of the universe
'up to us' (*eph' hēmin*), 20, 182, 199, 206, 209

virtue(s), 15, 85, 214, 216–19, 227
cardinal, 216
distinction between civic (*aretai politikai*) and purifications (*katharseis*), 195, 217–18, 220
reciprocity of, 220
Vlastos, Gregory, 115

Weil, Simone 252
White, Nicholas, 215
whole, *see* part: and whole
will, 3, 61, 86
see also freedom; *proairesis*; self-relations: self-determination
Woolf, Raphael, 17
World Soul, *see* Soul of the All